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The Official Australian PlayStation Magazine

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JAPAN We went,
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We played cool games!

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New game or more of the same?

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A curious platform adventure

Final Fantasy VII
First look at the epic RPG

PaRappa the Rapper
Crazy-ass party game!

HEAD TO HEAD
Hexen vs Exhumed

Tomb Raider 2, Gex 3D
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2 TOGGLES

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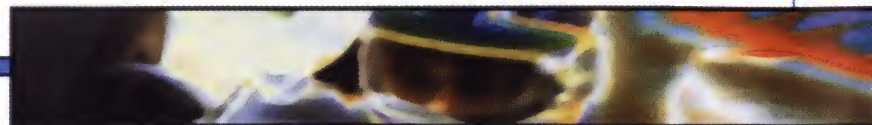
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Mr Skull sez: First person to name all the 2000AD characters in the screen shots down the side of the Syndicate Wars review will get something cool sent to them! Answers on the back of an exotic postcard.

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DEMO CD GUIDE

This issue's cover mounted CD contains no less than five great demos. Whatever your taste in games, there's bound to be a demo here to tickle your fancy. Racing freaks will be able to get their wheels muddy with Rally Cross, armchair sport enthusiasts can tee off with Actua Golf 2, Kurushii will tax the reactions of all the puzzle freaks out there, Hercules will entertain fans of Disney's latest animated epic and Overboard is for all the scurvy sea dogs who've been heaving over the side at the lack of quality multi-player galleon warfare simulations. Take your pick, and remember to have fun!

Hercules rolling demo

PUBLISHER: Sony RELEASE: September

Here's the game based on Disney's most recent production, the animated adventures of Hercules. As you'll see in this video of the game in action, Hercules is an old-style platform game which mixes side-scrolling stages with pseudo-3D running into the screen bits. And it's fun.



Rally Cross playable demo

PUBLISHER: Sony RELEASE: Now

Somewhat overshadowed by V-Rally, Sony's other big rally game of late, Rally Cross has been developed at Sony's internal American studios. It's not supposed to be a realistic driving sim by any means, what it is, however, is a rough 'n' tumble off-road racer with the added feature of four-player simultaneous racing with a multi-tap. The control of Rally Cross may seem awfully sloppy at first, but take the time to become accustomed to it and you'll soon be shredding around the tracks.



Overboard playable demo

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis RELEASE: October

Aarrgh!! Shiver me timbers and other such claptrap heard spouted in a dodgy pirate voice! Here's a game that offers plenty of treachery on the high seas, as you take to your leaky old galleon and fire broadsides at your mates. The concept of the game is simple. In single-player mode you sail around collecting treasure and blowing up other pirates after your booty. In multi-player mode, you and four other sea dogs sail around collecting weapons and blowing up each other. We like it, and we think you will, too.



Help!

If your demo CD refuses to work, check the following possible causes before returning it. If all else fails, send the broken or suspect CD to the address in the front of the mag, along with a written description of what the problem is, and we'll send you a brand new replacement. Don't forget to include your return address!

- You are putting it in a PlayStation, aren't you? Believe it or not, we have had people complaining that it doesn't work in their PC!

- Is it broken or cracked? A very small percentage of disks may be damaged in transit or on the newsstand.

- The disk appears fine, but doesn't load properly in your PlayStation, yet all your other games work fine. This could be due to a combination of a build up of fine dust on the CD and dirt or smudges on the PlayStation's lens. Blowing gently across the disk will usually help (or using one of the commercially available CD cleaners), but if you think there's a problem with your PlayStation, we suggest you contact your PlayStation dealer or Sony's customer support line on (02) 9878 0533.

Actua Golf 2

playable demo

PUBLISHER: Gremlin Int RELEASE: Now

There's nothing like a quiet stroll in the fields, stopping occasionally to whack a little white ball and have another snifter of Chivas Regal. Problem these days is finding the time to do so, but this is where video games have come to the rescue. May we present to you Actua Golf 2, the follow up (some may say sequel) to last year's acclaimed Actua Golf. This new edition features numerous improvements in the realm of 3D graphics and motion capture technology, as well as commentary from BBC's top old fart TV announcer. The full version features six new courses, so if you like what we have here, go out and buy it forthwith!



Kurushi

playable demo

PUBLISHER: Sony RELEASE: September

Here's an odd new puzzle game coughed up by the inscrutable department at Sony Japan. Appearing like a 3D version of Tetris, Kurushi (or IQ as it's known in Japan) follows the premise of 'a series of blocks tumbling down and you have to destroy them before they squash you'. It would appear to have the two necessary ingredients of a successful puzzle game - simplicity and addiction. See what you think of this, and if you like it you will find more levels in the retail version.



Sony shoots down game prices

Sony's new pricing structure has resulted in a drastic drop in the retail price of games. Selected premium titles, such as Crash 2, will sell for as little as \$69.95.



Competition Winners

Jonah Lomu

Paul Wallace, Jeremy booth, Robert Stewart & Jason Sallaway.

Rage Racer

Dale Waoe, Conan Sumera, Mark Waters, Henry Lang & Alex Teeson.

V-Rally

Tony Webber, Jay Thompson, Alex Rae, Mathew Peace & Dave Pinkton

Tenka

Sasha Liu, Death Breath, Stephen Murphy, S.L. Wainwright, Michael Taylor, Lewis Mitchell, Ellie Sheridan, Josh Deacon, Al White & Derek Jeffries

Sony Computer Entertainment Australia has announced a series of drastic price cuts to all new PlayStation software. How does Crash Bandicoot 2 for only \$69.95 sound? What about \$109.95 for Time Crisis packaged with the G-Con.45 light gun? And would you believe that Final Fantasy VII will cost only \$79.95 for all three discs?! Crazy as it may sound, these prices are for real and are part of Sony's new global pricing structure, which has undoubtedly caused a few sweaty brows over at Nintendo.

Additionally, all new Platinum titles from Sony are going to be \$39.95. There will also be a lot more Platinum titles from other distributors hitting the shelves. As well as the Platinum games reviewed in this issue, keep an eye out for the following titles to be re-released:

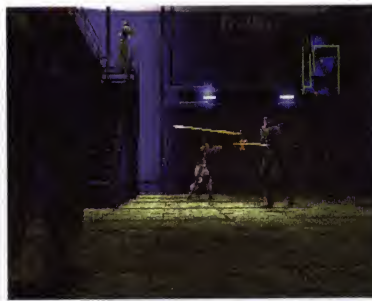
- Extreme Games
- Mortal Kombat 3
- Ridge Racer Revolution
- Fade To Black
- Need For Speed
- PGA Tour
- FIFA Soccer



Metal Gear Solid

Once one of the leading game publishers for 16-bit consoles, Konami has had a slow start in the 32-bit arena, but is now clawing its way back to the top. 1998 will be a big year for Konami, as March sees the release of one of the most eagerly awaited new games. Seen only on a video presentation, Metal Gear Solid was nevertheless proclaimed by many as the PlayStation game of the show.

According to Konami, Metal Gear will "Redefine the action/adventure genre." What this translates into is a very impressive 3D engine with loads of nifty graphical tricks and treats. The game is a high-tech military-based covert operations affair, with some of the best looking and sounding weapons ever to be declassified. We'll have more previews as the game's release draws nearer.



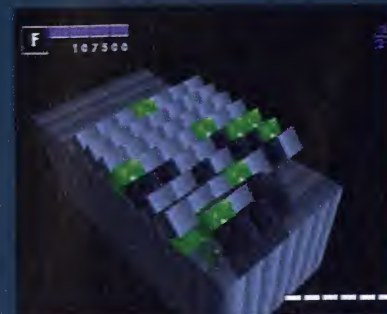
What's your IQ?

If you live outside Japan, your IQ is Kurushi. Yes, in another triumph for the legal department over the creative department, Sony's new puzzle game IQ has been renamed to Kurushi, whatever that means.

IQ was released in Japan a few months ago and we've found it to be highly addictive, eating dangerous

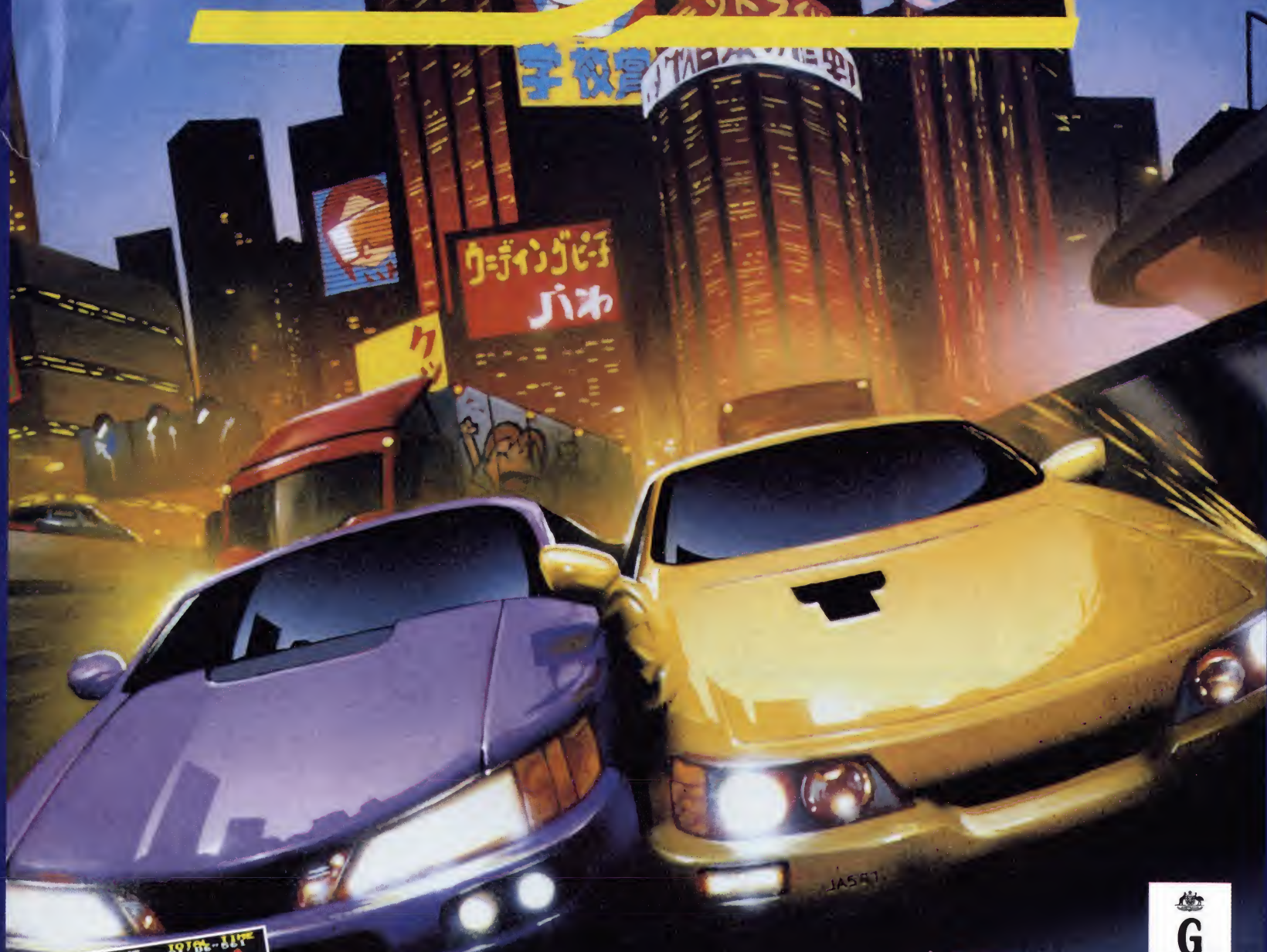
levels out of our work time. "Just one more level", we'd promise ourselves, then before we know it another hour would have passed!

Kurushi is due out in the shops very soon, and we'll have a full review in our next issue, but for the time being you can get a taste of this funky 3D puzzle game on our demo CD.





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Tekken 3 - Arcade Update

Since last issue's preliminary look at Namco's arcade dominating Tekken 3, our resident fighting game freak Hillous has been busy finding heaps of new features and hidden secrets in the game. Here's his latest update.

As promised, more characters keep popping up in the bottom row of Tekken 3's selection screen. At time of writing (late July), the number of fighters has hit 18, with only two yet to be unveiled. Mucking about in bouts now are Gun Jack, Julia Chang, Bryan Fury (the weatherman's evil twin brother?!), Heihachi Mishima, Mokujin, and Ogres 1 & 2.

Gun Jack is a blend of T2's Prototype Jack and Jack-2. Julia is Michelle's daughter, though she lacks the fat to imply that the sumo wrestler Ganryu is her father. Plays just like mum, right down to her three 10-hit combos. Bryan is an evil-looking corpse of a man, with a facial scar that just has to be part of his reason for entering the King of Iron Fist Tournament, though another plausible excuse could be that he just likes beating up people. A hard (core?) kick-boxer, he has (T2) Bruce's 1-2, 1-2 and is the only guy capable of throwing you on the ground so hard that you bounce back up into the air - to head height!

Heihachi has aged, though age does not seem to have diminished any of his physical power. Now the virtual ruler of the world, owner of the multi-billion dollar Mishima Conglomerate, it was he who organised this third KoF Tournament. The reason there are two guys called Ogre is this: the boss in the final stage, Stage 10, is a humanoid demi-god who killed Jun Kazama four years ago (to those who haven't yet, close your eyes and shut your mouth for one minute's respect). As soon as you



win your first round against this behemoth, he/it picks up Heihachi's lifeless body and transforms into the evil mega-tortoise from "TMNT II: The Secret of the Ooze", the second Ogre. This gargantuan gargoyle has moves from all over the place - including a very Devil/Angel-esque projectile - but instead of lasers, the Ogre shoots fire. Here I must kiss Namco's behind for so convincingly depicting the man shrouded in flames. Which leads me to the last in the list, the most innovative and

flammable character in any beat 'em up to date, Mokujin. Made up entirely of cylindrical logs of wood, Mokujin is the random select feature which Tekken 1 and 2 missed dearly. When chosen, Mokujin adopts a different character's posture and entire repertoire of moves in each new round, so you have to study your stance to figure out who you are before you get trounced. This feature gives even the pros a breath of fresh challenge. More Tekken tomfoolery next issue.

Freeze, Citizen!

Stop flicking through these pages and pay attention! There's a new game coming to the PlayStation from Gremlin Interactive and it spells big trouble for all you law-breakers out there. The game puts you in the very big steel-capped boots of none other than Judge Dredd, and your mission is to dispense justice with a steady hand. This is a light gun game which carries you on a pre-rendered journey through Mega City 1 on the trail of a rogue Tek-Judge who's taken the mayor hostage. Naturally, Dredd finds this situation intolerable so you must use his Law Giver to put and end to this shameful disruption to the honour of the Judges. Best of all, the game is based around the stories in 2000AD, and NOT the awful movie starring Jim Stallone. It's due for a release in December so try to keep out of the Iso Cubes until then.



May The Force Beat You to a Pulp

Tekken meets Star Wars is the easiest way this game can be described, and certainly the demo versions showing at E3 were getting a lot of interest, even though the game was very much in its infancy. Apparently Teras Kasi is a form of martial arts which exists in the Star Wars milieu. You get to control a bunch of fighters (from either side of the moral ballpark) in a tournament which will decide who is the ruler of the galaxy and all-round hardest dude. The game will let you bash belt and wallop to your heart's content with eight of the characters from the Star Wars world. Obvious favourites include Luke, Chewie, Han Solo, and that asthmatic plastic bloke in the cape, and each fighter will have a variety of special moves and combos (a la Tekken). There will also be superpowered Teras Kasi moves (Luke uses his sword) which can only be utilised after you have performed your skills proficiently during a bout. Teras Kasi looked mighty smooth, and certainly the polygonal fighters were as close to realistic as it can get in a video game. Definitely a game to look out for when it eventually arrives next March.

The Odds are against you.



He's skinny. He wears a loincloth. He has no weapons.
(He's the guy that you play.)



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A.L.I.V.E.
Aware Lifeforms In
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David Jones



Harvey Norman



ODDWORLD
INHABITANTS



V-Rally and the Analog Pad

Last issue we made a big fuss about V-Rally, the new rally game from Infogrames. In particular, we made a fuss about how good it was with Sony's new analog pad. And it was. Unfortunately, this feature was taken out of the final retail version without our knowing, thus making us look kind of stupid.

To set the record straight, the version we reviewed was what we refer to as pre-master beta. This means that the game is 99% finished, and is lacking in only minor details such as loading screens and other irrelevant features. In the case of V-Rally, we received several beta versions over the course of a few weeks, each being an improvement over the previous one in terms of car weight and polygon break-up, and all worked fine with our Analog Pad. The last thing we expected was for a major aspect of the game such as this to be taken out altogether. At no point during our appraisal of the game were we given any indication by Sony or Infogrames that the analog control would be removed. The first we know of it was when we got the final packaged version and dozens of confused readers started calling us up asking for an explanation.

We asked both Sony and Infogrames for their explanations as to what happened, here are their respective replies.

"Regarding any consumer calls or letters you may receive regarding V-Rally and the analog pad compatibility, here is an official response from SCE.

The miscommunication about the incompatibility between V-Rally and analog pad is unfortunate for all parties. SCE has taken this situation up with Infogrames, who are ultimately responsible for the lack of information on this change.

Regarding the official response to consumers' calls relating to this matter, please brief the following:

1) Apologise for the inconvenience caused to consumers.

2) Unfortunately, finished game from Infogrames was not Analog Controller compatible. Some game reviews may have been undertaken on early incomplete game which did have "some" initial compatibility.

3) A large selection of analog compatible games will be available. Porsche Challenge and Rally Cross are out. Future compatible releases include: Rapid Racer, Ace Combat, G Police, Crash Bandicoot 2, Rosco McQueen.

4) In digital mode the controller is compatible with all games.

- Sony Computer Entertainment"

And from Stephane Baudet, V-Rally's producer at Infogrames:

"V-Rally final version is effectively not compatible with this device, despite the fact that previous gold versions were.

The European version of this pad was not entirely finalised when we sent V-Rally to Sony for approval (end of May). Sony was, at that time, not sure about the guidelines to follow (calibration, etc...), as there was no European title compatible with this device yet. We could only say that V-Rally was compatible with our prototype and we couldn't guaranty that it would have been fully compatible with the manufactured product. In order to avoid half compatibility with the final Sony analogue pad, we said to Sony Europe that the game was finally not compatible with this future device.

When we (Stephan and this magazine's editor) spoke at E3, I didn't know that the compatibility was finally totally removed from the game. Because the Analogue pad is still not available in Europe, we haven't decided yet to do a new master supporting this device. If the marketing and sells departments decide to do so,



we will support this device because manufactured versions are now available for developers.

Sorry for the trouble caused by this matter.

*- Sincerely yours,
Stephane Baudet."*

So there you have it. And if you have an analog pad and V-Rally, you'd be excused for feeling ripped-off. Okay, so the analog bit doesn't work, but you still have a good new pad and a great rally game. If you're really not happy with the pad, you could try to exchange it for a Negcon or compatible analog controller which does work with V-Rally, but expect to pay the price difference.

Our thoughts on this debacle are that perhaps there should have been better communication between Sony and Infogrames. Maybe Infogrames should have delayed the release of V-Rally until its programmers had the correct and official Sony specifications for the analog pad, and perhaps Sony should have included a Negcon emulation mode in the analog pad, which would have compensated to some extent. We sincerely apologise to all readers who bought V-Rally and the Analog Pad thinking they were compatible.

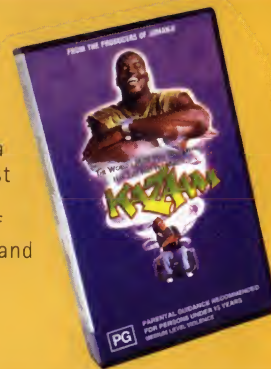
Helicopter hi-jinks

Here's a cool new game which will work with the new Analog Pad, in fact it is being developed specifically for it. The game is called Fly By Wire, and it's a remote controlled helicopter simulation. Yes, remote controlled, but that doesn't mean it will be any less of a game than if it was based on real helicopters. Shiny is planning to release the game early next year in the US, and we hope to bring you news of a Pal conversion soon.



Nice pair of vids!

There comes a point in every gamer's life when you have to put down the control pad and give your thumbs a rest. For some, this is a time to sleep, but if you're feeling a little hyperactive and still need visual stimulation, you could do worse than to wack on a video. Our friends at Polygram Video have given us ten double packs of two of the finest celluloid moments Hollywood has to offer. The videos are *Barb Wire*, starring the fine actress Pamela Anderson, and *Kazaam*, featuring the multi-talented Shaquille O'Neil. If you want to add them to your collection, simply tell us which movie you'd watch first and why. Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to the usual address.



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PLAYSTATION PRESS TOUR OF TOKYO



On the instance of Sony Computer Entertainment, a group of dishevelled video game journalists from around the world were whisked off to Tokyo to visit the offices of SCEI, Square and Namco to see the latest PlayStation games on offer in Japan. The editor of this magazine was among that group, which also included the editors of the UK, German and French PlayStation magazines, as well as a few freelance journalists from Europe and Japan. Here is a journal of our visit.

SUNDAY EVENING, TOKYO NARITA AIRPORT

The sun was just setting as we stepped off the plane and onto Japanese soil. Actually there wasn't any soil in the airport terminal, but we did ride a very courteous escalator which reminded us that "The end of the walkway is approaching", and to "Please take care when stepping off."

Narita airport is about an hour's drive from Tokyo, but this turned out to be closer to two hours. Once we got into the fringes of the city, the narrow highways our airport limousine mini-bus was travelling on started twisting and snaking through buildings and other highways, just like in Tokyo Highway Battle! The view out the window of night time Tokyo was astounding! Every building was covered in a haphazard collection of air conditioning ducts and fans, and many had giant neon signs teetering above them. The horizon had a hazy orange-brown glow hanging over it, punctured here and there by huge radio masts that were covered in flashing red lights. The overall effect of this scenery, combined with the curious feeling one gets when first in a foreign country, made us feel like we were travelling through a scene from Blade Runner or a William Gibson novel.

MONDAY MORNING, 26TH FLOOR OF THE NEW OTANI HOTEL

Wake up. "Woah, I'm in Japan!" After remembering this important point, we set about making the most of our only full-day off. Naturally, we wanted to make a pilgrimage to our Mecca, Akihabra. This small but densely packed part of Tokyo is the electronic district of the city, and where all the cool game stores we'd heard fabulous stories about were located. The quickest way to get there was on the subway, and despite the initially confusing number of intersecting lines, we found the right train and joined the mid-morning crush of people going here, there and everywhere.

Akihabra was indeed the gaming oasis we had imagined it to be. It seemed as if there was a game shop on every corner, and most had television sets sitting out the front with the latest games hooked up for any passer-by to play. The fine, constant drizzle didn't seem to bother anyone, as the shop keepers simply hung sheets of clear plastic over everything. A typical game shop consisted of a ground floor filled with cheat books, strategy guides and game music CDs, a floor devoted to PlayStation, a floor split between Sega Saturn and Nintendo (both N64 and Super Famicom, which is still going strong in Japan), a floor of PC software and, of course, a floor of pornographic PC software.

The variety of games, systems and accessories was immense, and you were more than welcome to try out anything you were interested in. We even



Sample the latest games on the streets of Tokyo!

saw a Pippin in operation, a working Super Famicom Satellaview, had a go on a Virtual Boy and got thumped on a Tekken 3 machine by a 10 year-old school boy. Some bargains we picked up included Japanese analog pads for about \$30, a cool Bomberman AV selector for \$12 and a Saturn Virtual On dual arcade stick for \$28 (for a friend, honest!).

One game we couldn't find in any shop, however, was a game we were in desperate need of - Tobal 2. In fact with the exception of Final Fantasy VII, we didn't see any Squaresoft titles for sale in any shops. This is because Square is using its Digi-Cube vending machines to sell all its games from. We finally found our copy of Tobal 2 in a 7-11-style shop!

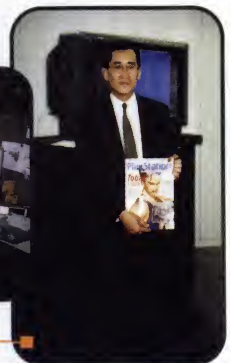
TUESDAY, SQUARE VISIT

Squaresoft was the first company we paid a visit and our respects to. Square is located on a few of the upper floors of the stylish Arco Tower, a short drive from

A Squaresoft artist working on FFVII



Square's President Takechi with our mag!

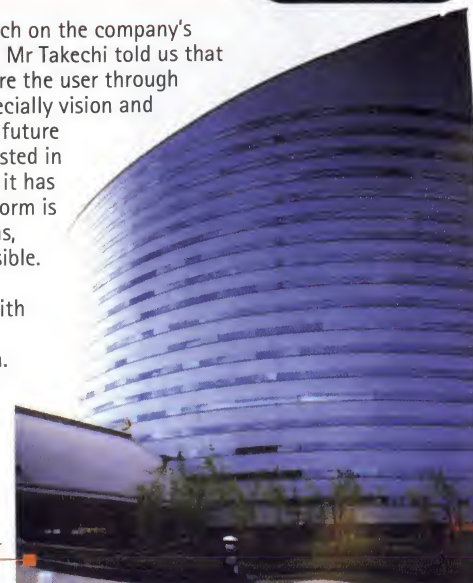


Tokyo's centre.

We were welcomed by President Tomouki Takechi, who gave us a speech on the company's history and future direction. Mr Takechi told us that Square's dream was to inspire the user through the player's five senses, especially vision and sound. With regard to what future hardware Square was interested in pursuing, we were told that it has no fixed plans, but if a platform is seen to realise Square's ideas, then anything could be possible. He also hinted at a strong interest at being involved with Sony in developing the successor to the PlayStation.

We were then given a revealing tour of the creative department, in particular the division which was working on the English language version of

Squaresoft's offices are in the Arco Tower



Final Fantasy VII. One room, which was just full of artists, was divided into approximately 200 cubical work stations, in which each one sat an artist surrounded by a monitor and a TV hooked up to a blue de-bugging PlayStation. Talk about cramped, these poor worker drones barely had enough room to spin their chair around! Another vast room was filled with rows of TVs which were also hooked up to de-bugging PlayStations, and in here was a silent team of play-testers wearing headphones, and each with instructions to look for bugs in a particular part of the game. In another room, we saw part of Square's impressive collection of SGI machines. Apparently, last year Square was the second biggest purchaser of Silicon Graphics hardware, next only to NASA.

Perhaps because of its confidence at being un-assailable in its domination of its chosen market, Square was not at all hesitant about showing us areas where new, as yet unannounced projects were underway, and we saw more behind the scenes activity than we ever expected to. All the journalists were suitably impressed, and we left feeling we had experienced something very special.

Later that night, Yoshi-san, our guide from Square, took us all out to a traditional Japanese restaurant. We sat on high chairs around a stage, upon which two chefs knelt over a steaming hot plate and continuously cooked and served gourmet delicacies, most of which had been twitching or flopping around in baskets only seconds before! It was here that we discovered one of the finer arts of sake drinking, which is that you must never fill your own cup. This resulted in the more exuberant members of our entourage continually peering into each other's cups too make sure they weren't empty. Thus the night degraded. We soon moved on to a series of strange Tokyo bars, which included a bizarre experience in one called "The Paranoia Cafe", which had moulded plastic faces and eyeballs melting out of the walls and ceiling!

WEDNESDAY MORNING, 7:30AM

After the previous night's outing, we were awoken sharply at some ungodly hour of the morning to be told we were supposed to be at the hotel's foyer five minutes ago for the 7:30AM-sharp bus trip to Namco. Well, that was more than enough of a reason to get any hung-over game freak into a suit and onto the back seat of the bus in a flash!

The Namco visit was a lot more formal than the trip to Square, and we sat at desks and listened intently as a row of general managers gave us the deal on Namco. Our interest was perked when they rolled out the massive rear-projection TV to demonstrate their latest games.

Ace Combat 2, which had been released in Japan the week before, was presented to us by its producers, who said they were inspired by their desire to fly the planes in the game. Next up was the long-awaited PlayStation conversion of Time Crisis, which was still a month or so away from its release date. This was where we first found out about the extra PlayStation game included with the arcade conversion, and we had our first look at the sexy new G-



Ace Combat 2's producers presenting the game at Namco

Con.45 light gun. We were also shown Gun Bullit, the crazy, side show alley-style gun game which is very popular in Japanese arcades, though many of the European journalists questioned its popularity outside of Japan.

The big disappointment was the lack of any information on the PlayStation conversion of Tekken 3. All Namco would say on the matter was "Namco is planning to convert Tekken 3 to the PlayStation. That is all." And it was.

THURSDAY, SONY HQ

When we arrived at the offices of Sony Computer Entertainment International, we paused a moment to consider that we were about to enter the headquarters of the biggest video game company in the world. Once inside, we were led to the presentation room and were met by SCEI president Teruhisa Tokunaka and Ken Kutaragi, the creator of the PlayStation. We were shown graphs and statistics plotting the amazing growth in Sony's



SCEI president Mr Teruhisa Tokunaka

dominance of the Japanese market. One interesting fact which emerged was that the overall share of PlayStation ownership between the different age groups was becoming more evenly spread, meaning that more and more younger and older people are buying the hardware than was previously the case.

After the initial speeches were out of the way, we got down to the serious matter of looking at the games! The Japanese were very keen to hear our thoughts on the selection of unusual titles presented before us, especially PaRappa The Rappa, which is the first strange and uniquely Japanese game to be marketed strongly in western territories. The verdict from the Journalists was quite positive, thanks to a hilarious demonstration by the game's creator, Mr Masaya Matsuura.

That night we were privileged to attend the annual Japanese PlayStation Third Party Awards. Scooping the specially created award for sales over three million was Final Fantasy VII. Its nearest competition was from Bio Hazard (Resident Evil), which despite being well over a year old has remained one of the strongest selling titles, topping the million mark. Other notable titles to ship over 500,000 units included Street Fighter Zero 2, Tobal No.1, PaRappa, The Rappa, Pyuo Pyuo, a selection of unfathomable strategy games and, surprisingly, Crash Bandicoot. Why surprisingly? Because Crash is the first game not developed in Japan to be really successful there. We later met Jason Rubin from Naughty Dog, who attributed Crash's success to the fact that when developing the game they had continual feedback from Sony Japan as to what the Japanese thought of the game and what elements it needed to make it appealing to Japanese game players. The advertising of Crash Bandicoot in Japan is very different to the rest of the world and the marketing artwork was redesigned with a slicker and even more cartoony look.

FRIDAY, LAST DAY IN JAPAN

With our plane due to leave Tokyo that afternoon, we made a final visit to Akihabra to stock up on Japanese game posters and other cool things such as the Mobile Suit Gundam mouse pad which now graces this editor's desk. Without a doubt, the strangest thing we saw was a Boy George in drag poseable action figure! No, we didn't buy it, but we couldn't resist grabbing a clutch of Tamagotchis for the art directors back home!

As our airport limousine took us on the long journey to Narita Airport, passing by a man-made, fully-enclosed ski slope towering up at the side of the road, we thought back over the past week's events. We saw sights that few Japanese game journalists have had the opportunity to witness, which left us feeling very privileged, indeed. We were also left with a strong craving to return, knowing that our week's adventures were but a taste of what Tokyo had to offer.

Special thanks to all at SCEI, Square and Namco for the generous hospitality we experienced during our stay in Tokyo, and thanks to Chris and Sel at SCE Australia and to Jason, Liz and Alan at SCE Europe for getting us over there at such short notice.

The Tokyo HQ of Sony Computer Entertainment



GHOST IN THE SHELL

If you lamented that the ultra cool Fuchikoma attack pods used by the good guys in the original comic didn't make it into the anime, the Ghost in the Shell game will give you a grin from ear to ear! Putting you in control of such a machine, the 12 missions range from a high-speed chase along a highway to taking out a variety of terrorists and their mecha. The environments you have to operate in include sewer networks, city streets and high-rise office buildings. Some missions are a white knuckle race against time in which you must rid an area littered with detonators before they blow! The Fuchikoma has the ability to jump from structure to structure, as well as climbing walls and ceilings, so you can take out an attack helicopter by firing up into it while clinging to the side of a building, or creep down to surprise your ground based enemies. Your weapons consist of twin machine guns, guided missiles and grenades and, needless to say, you have ample opportunity to put your mecha's firepower to good use!

The graphics are packed with detail and are glitch free. Likewise, the presentation is top notch, featuring slick pre-mission tactical computer displays in the style as seen in the movie. The soundtrack is also worthy of a mention, with electronic beats by respectable techno artists such as Joey Beltram, Derrick May and Westbam, among others.



A big bonus for anime fans is that Ghost in the Shell also features a fair amount of animated cut sequences between certain levels. The character and mecha design style is faithful to the original comic, as opposed to the movie, and it's no surprise: they're by the comic creator Masamune Shirow himself, who also initiated the game project.

The director of the animated sequences is none other than Hiroyuki Kitakubo, who also directed the anime version of one of Shirow's older works, Black Magic M66. The stunning intro is a seamless blend of 3D computer generated backgrounds and 2D animation; a lot of care has been taken to ensure that these two elements work well together and the result, which include some real fancy camera work and tricks like motion blurring, simply has to be seen in action to be believed!

Look out for Amos' interview with Mr Kitakubo, other anime directors and his report on the tours of the studios he visited while in Japan in a forthcoming issue of PlayStation Magazine.



ARMOURED CORE

If you have a fetish for running around in a mech suit blowing the crap out of other mech suits (and it's surprising how many people do), then you'll go ga-ga over Armoured Core.

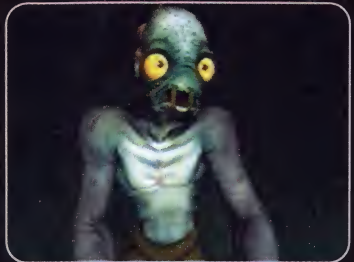
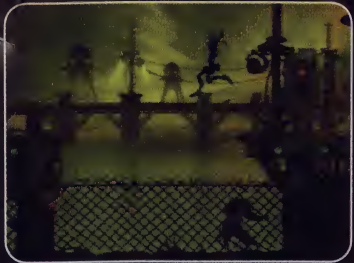
This is the Virtual On game for the PlayStation you've been waiting for, except that it's got a lot more to it than simply squaring off against one other opponent. There's dozens of missions to cut a swath of destruction through, and each is quite different from the others. One early mission sees you running through a tunnel to defend a stranded petrol tanker that's being attacked, while another puts you out in the open attacking a small but heavily defended island. Surviving and successfully completing a mission rewards you with vast sums of cash, which can be put to good use in upgrading various parts of your mech. Better legs make you run faster, new jets allow you to fly for longer, and bigger guns let you blow more things up! You can even play around with your paint design and colour, which apparently does have an effect on how easily the enemy can detect you.

Armoured Core has recently been released in Japan, where it is proving very popular, and American and PAL versions are expected early next year.



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- *An Abe T-Shirt*
- *A huge Oddworld mug and other Odd stuff*

To win an Oddworld pack we want you to tell us the oddest place you can imagine playing Oddworld on your PlayStation.

Write the answer on the back of an envelope and send it to:
ODD COMP
PlayStation Magazine
78 Renwick St
Redfern, NSW 2016

Conditions of entry:

1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand.
2. Entries must be received by October 8, 1997.
3. Employees of Next Media and GT Interactive may not enter.
4. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into.



MADE IN JAPAN

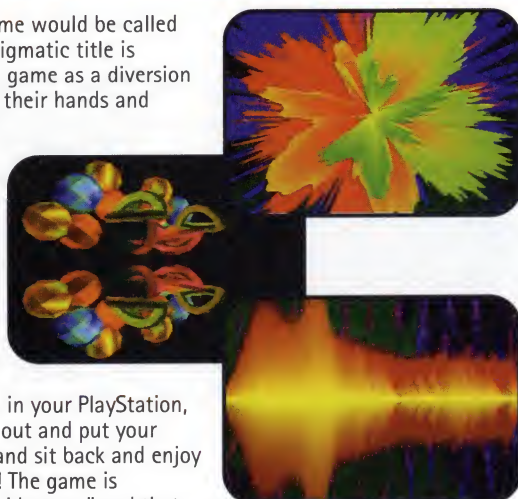
Japan is a hotbed for new and unusual styles of games. During our recent trip to Japan, Sony was kind enough to show us some of their new games developed at their Tokyo headquarters. These included three games with the names Baby Universe, Depth and P.I.T. (Pet In Television). Strange names, weird games. We also take a look at one of Square's latest RPGs - Final Fantasy Tactics - which was packaged in Japan with a demo CD of some upcoming titles.



BABY UNIVERSE

What sort of a game would be called Baby Universe? This enigmatic title is actually not so much a game as a diversion for those with time on their hands and nothing on their mind. It's similar in concept to the V-CD which graced the demo CD on our first issue (and proved quite popular with many readers, we might add, in hope of shifting a few more back issues!).

Put Baby Universe in your PlayStation, load it up, then take it out and put your favourite music CD in and sit back and enjoy the tripped out visuals! The game is promoted as a "3D Kaleidoscope" and that pretty much sums it up. A selection of different graphic modes and sequences is at your fingertips for you to spin, warp, rotate and otherwise manipulate to your heart's content. For what it is, it's pretty cool and it does the job well. If Sony decides to release it here for a reasonable price, they may well be onto a winner.



"Cruise stage" and listen to it while making your dolphin cavort amongst the fishes! It's a cool idea and we applaud Sony for backing such an unconventional product, but it really doesn't bother us to know that it won't ever be released outside of Japan.

P.I.T.

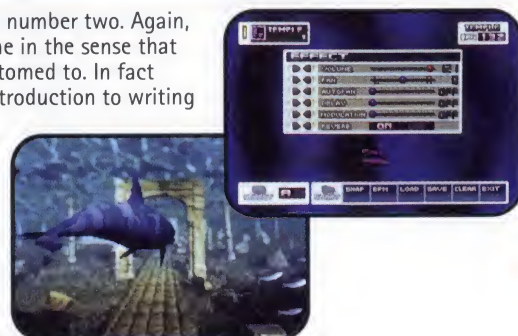
Do you know what a Tamagotchi is? If you do, then you'll find it easy to understand what this game is about. For those who have never heard of the Tamagotchi phenomenon, it is basically a hand-held electronic device with an LED screen that has a virtual creature 'living' in it. Every so often it makes a peeping noise and needs to be either fed, played with, given medicine or have its kitty litter changed. Look after it well and it grows and prospers, mistreat it and it may wither and die.

P.I.T. stands for Pet In Television, which is a fair description of this curious Sony game. Your role is to guide your virtual pet through a bizarre landscape. You don't directly control it, though, for your pet has a mind of its own and if it doesn't like the orders you've been giving it, it may revolt and get up to mischief! Very strange, but Sony is actually considering releasing it in Europe and Australia. We await with bated breath.



DEPTH

Okay, weird game number two. Again, this is not really a game in the sense that most people are accustomed to. In fact Depth is more of an introduction to writing electronic music. It features a basic eight-track sequencer program and a collection of sounds to run through it, and is presented with a curious graphical interface of a dolphin. Yep, you become Flipper as you swim around between "stages". Go to the "Groove editor" to mix your track, then once it's done you can swim the



FINAL FANTASY TACTICS

This is the game that all the hardcore Japanese RPG freaks have been waiting for since Final Fantasy VII came out last year. Despite the apparent similarity with the names, there is very little which the two Final Fantasy games share in common. While FF VII is a cinematic affair with relatively

simple battles, FF Tactics delves deeply into the realm of turn-based, capture-the-square-next-to-you strategic battles.

The strength of these sort of games is in the storylines, and in this department Square has had much experience. Not being particularly fluent in Japanese, we had absolutely no idea what was going on between the characters, though judging from the number of exclamation marks at the end of sentences, something very dramatic was happening! We managed to get a short way into the game by blindly and repeatedly pressing the circle button until we got to the following screen, but without understanding the proceedings it soon became rather monotonous.

So will we ever be able to play Final Fantasy Tactics in English? Although Square and Sony have yet to announce any plans to translate this massive adventure, there has been a lot of interest in this title from American RPG fans. Who knows, if FFVII does well in the American market (and it undoubtedly will), perhaps Square will be convinced to translate it and eventually do a PAL conversion.

SAGA FRONTIER

What's this? Another epic RPG from Square! Saga Frontier continues on from the popular Romancing Saga series of games on the Super Famicom. This is a classic RPG in the sense of cute little elfin characters with green hair running around everywhere, and bares more than a passing similarity in style to The Secret Of Mana, another old Square RPG which was actually released on the SNES in Australia.

As with FF Tactics, we were able to play the game, but as we had no idea what was going on, soon lost interest. But should Saga Frontier ever become available over here, it will certainly be one for RPG fans to look out for.

FINHANDER

Square surprised everyone when it released the revolutionary fighting game Tobal No.1. Here was a company best known for its superlative RPG adventures producing a ground-breaking beat 'em up. Well, it looks like Square is about to do the same thing to the shoot 'em up genre.

At first glance Einhandler looks like a gorgeously



detailed side-scrolling shooter. But look closely and you'll see that it's actually a gloriously detailed 3D side-scrolling shooter. The 3D bit refers to the construction of the spaceships and backgrounds, and this allows the camera angle to pan around from side to side to give a more dramatic effect at certain points during the game, such as confrontations with the bosses. Einhandler is still a fair way off from being released and, as usual, we haven't been told whether it will be released anywhere outside of Japan. Fortunately, the style of game will be easily accepted in Western countries, so the chance of a conversion looks promising.

FRONT MISSION ALTERNATIVE

The other Front Mission game on the Square demo disk has a slightly more original approach to the style of game. The premise behind the game is once again about a bunch of big mecha units blowing the seven shades of metal filings out of each other. Set in a future in which the Pacific States are warring against the North American mainland, the battles take place around the world as each side attempts to strengthen its hold in the world domination stakes.

The main difference between this and FM 2 is that FM Alternative appears to be a real-time combat sim with less emphasis on tactical strategy and more on individual battle between small groups. The PlayStation's 3D capabilities have been put to good use in constructing the huge variety of impressively detailed mecha units and other cool futuristic battle-craft. Of the two Front Mission games, Alternative is the most likely to get a release in the US and Europe, though we don't expect to hear any news of this for some time as the game has only just come out in Japan.



FRONT MISSION 2

The first Front Mission game appeared in Japan on the Super Famicom (Super NES) in 1995 and sold over half a million copies. So it's not really a surprise to see a PlayStation version appear (although it is a surprise to see two!). The theme is post-apocalyptic world domination with giant robotic war machines, and the game is a grid-based strategy affair. You have a small group of mecha units at your command which you take through a series of battle locations. Groups of enemies confront and attempt to surround your team so you have to move your mechs around to best hold our ground. When two opposing mechs come face to face with each other on adjoining grid squares, an action battle sequence is played out before you, with each mech presented as a stylish collection of polygons. Looks great, but it's hard to judge whether it would take off here.



It is almost upon us. The biggest selling PlayStation game to date is currently undergoing the final stages of tweaking and is set for a November release. We've managed to get our hands on one of the first versions of the game translated into English, and our lives haven't been quite the same since.



Final Fantasy VII

We had our first taste of Final Fantasy VII late last year when a preview sample of it turned up on a demo CD packaged with the Japanese version of Tobal No.1. We played it through, not exactly sure what was going on, but captivated nonetheless. A couple of months later we got the fully packaged game but, despite our intense curiosity, we refrained from playing too much of it, for fear of spoiling the surprises that lay in store for us. The long wait was at last over when a set of the American beta discs turned up. And needless to say, we haven't stopped playing the game since!

The game starts with you, the main character Cloud (you can re-name each major character when you first meet them), preparing to undertake a mission of dire consequence. You've been hired by a local 'terrorist' organisation called Avalanche, and they want you to help them destroy one of the Mako Reactors in Midgar City. Mako is the planet's life-source, but, much like uranium, when it's used to generate energy it can have disastrous effects on the eco-system. At this point of the game, Cloud's only concern is whether or not he's going to get paid at the end of the job. However, as the game progresses, his attitude may change, but this is up to the player.

Before you know it, you've become deeply involved with the members



of Avalanche, in particular the two characters Tifa and Barret. Barret is the first to join you in combat, and he proves to be a very strong and valuable ally throughout the game. Tifa is the next to join your party, and

NAME	STATUS	EXP	LEVEL	HP	MP
Mr Skull	2184	2271	311		
Doc Boche	1793	1884	311		
Kujo	1690	1930	348		

NAME	STATUS	EXP	LEVEL	HP	MP
Mr Skull	965	1036	179		
CaitSeith	1132	1132	157		
Prassard	738	961	141		

NAME	STATUS	EXP	LEVEL	HP	MP
Mr Skull	2099	2271	311		
Doc Boche	1519	1884	311		
Kujo	1603	1910	314		

NAME	STATUS	EXP	LEVEL	HP	MP
Mr Skull	1897	2271	271		
Doc Boche	1069	1884	311		
Kujo	1346	1910	314		



it would seem that she and Cloud may have had some sort of relationship in the past... By now you're well on your way to destroying the next reactor, but just as you're starting to become fond of your new friends, something happens which splits your party up. It's at about this early point in the game that you start to realise how massive it is. You've been playing for hours, yet you are still within the confines of the City, where the action initially commenced. New characters soon join your team, you get out of the city and the plot starts to thicken!

So now you've got an idea of how the story begins, you may be wondering what the actual gameplay consists of. For many players, the mere mention of the term RPG (Role Playing Game) is enough to send them into a catatonic state, mumbling in shock about hit points and turn-based combat. Yes, FFVII is an RPG and yes, it does contain hit points and turn-based combat, but it is all presented in such a user-friendly manner that you'll hardly notice. Such details are easy to ignore with all the plot twists and graphical splendour to watch! In

fact, you could theoretically get through almost all of the battle screens without pressing anything other than the circle button.

Of course, only a fool would do something so stupid, for you'd be missing out on half the game! Pretty soon you'll have picked up some tasty new weapons and magic, and you'll be hanging out for a battle to use them in. The more fights you get into, the more experience points you gain, and the more powerful your attacks become. This simple balance of progression and skill keeps the game flowing at a steady pace.

There are three parts to the game which occur separately, but are intertwined and equally important. The first is the exploration part, where you (Cloud) run around talking to people and looking for the next path to follow that will take you deeper into the game. The next, and most passive bits, are the story sections in which the player has no control other than to skip through the test messages. These are usually presented in the same graphics

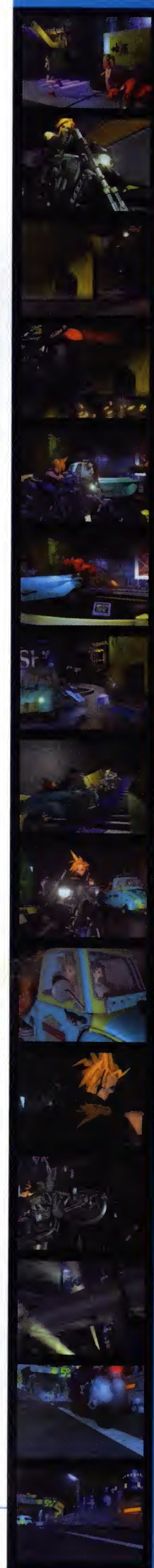
and settings as the exploration bits, but you sit back and watch the characters interact. These generally happen whenever you meet someone new, and major turning points of the game reward you with a stunning rendered sequence. And finally, there are the battle scenes already mentioned. These occur randomly while exploring anywhere outside of a town, as well as the inevitable confrontations with bosses. Cloud and the two other members of his party who are travelling with him at the time, face off against a selection of monsters. Here you get to play with whatever toys you've acquired along your travels, and have



the chance to mess around with magic. All the expected magical attacks are available; such as fire, ice, lightning, etc, but you will also eventually have the power to summon elemental spirits such as Shiva, the Ice Goddess, or Ifrit, the Fire Demon.

Since we've been playing Final Fantasy VII, we've been involved in an Akira-style motorcycle highway battle, ridden a cable car to a futuristic Las Vegas in the sky, gambled on the Chocobo races, taken a trip through the universe in a virtual observatory, infiltrated the ranks of the evil Shin-ra corporation, rescued a fearsome lab experiment, worn a dress as a disguise and used a broken plane as a boat - and we're still on the first disc!

What wonders lie ahead of us, we can only imagine, but the desperation to find out has been driving us insane - if only there were more hours in the day! That said, we're off to visit the Ancient's Temple where we hope to catch up with the mysterious Sephiroth... Review and more behind the scenes stuff next issue.



FEATURE: RAPID RACER

SPEED ***POWER*** ***FUN!***



Rapid Racer is the latest game from io, Sony's internal UK development team which brought us Porsche Challenge. Andrew Iredale caught up with the game's producer, Pascal Jarry, at E3 earlier this year and spoke to him about the game's development and how it focuses on the three key words - Speed, Power, Fun!

PSM: When did the initial groundwork begin on Rapid Racer and what was the inspiration behind it?

PJ: SCEE started two and a half years ago, far before Porsche Challenge. One day, one of the guys in the team came up with an effect that looked quite like water. He worked on that for the next six months until he was very happy with it, and then we thought about what could be done with it. We decided that if there was one thing lacking in most racing games, it was the feeling of real speed and power. Wipeout is an exception, and we really like it, but there's not much freedom offered by the tracks.

Making Rapid Racer was very different to making Porsche Challenge, because the Porsche game was a known genre, and we knew exactly what we wanted to do with it. But with Rapid Racer you have to deal with the dynamics of both the boats and of the water, which is constantly moving and is affected by the wake of the other boats, so it is very different to other racing games.

PSM: Are you a racing game freak? And are you planning another racer or are you going to change tack for your next project?

PJ: SCEE has no plan for another racing game at the moment. Porsche Challenge and Rapid Racer were very different, this is why we've done two racing games, but we stop for now. The new games are completely different.

PSM: Many racing games suffer from poor track design which results in the game becoming boring once the player has mastered it. What did you do in Rapid Racer to address this problem?

PJ: One of the most important factors of the game is the water - you can't get bored with it because you can't always predict it. Sometimes you will arrive at a point and hit a good wave and make a jump, but sometimes you won't. However, you can't make the environment too random, or it won't work as a racing game. This is because one of the most important things about racing games is that you can keep improving upon your times, but if there's too much variation in the course you can't do this.

When we started designing the game we spent a lot of time working on the tracks - we even got the artists to draw one of them thirty times until we were happy with it! To develop a track we'd start with its layout on paper. After deciding on the difficulty level of the track, we will add the right amount of curves, their directions and any jumps or drops. It's similar to the design of an indoor motocross track, with different sections of flat turns, banked turns, fast straights, short bumps and big jumps.

Once we have a design on paper that we're happy with, we give it to the

artists to build on the Silicon Graphics machines. First we just make it with only the water and the banks on either side, and then we play it. If we're still happy with the design after our initial play, we continue building the rest of it.

PSM: Are the water currents always the same for each lap, or are they random?

PJ: We have several current settings for each difficulty level. During one race they won't change, but as the cycle of the waves and the current are not in sync, it is difficult to predict and the players have to keep on their toes.

PSM: How is the racing structured in the game?

PJ: At the start of the game you have only three boats available out of a total of twelve. One is strong in speed, one is strong in acceleration and the other is strong in stability. You can upgrade each boat in any of these three abilities, and when you have upgraded a boat to its maximum, a new boat will become available.

PSM: The control pad implementation in Porsche Challenge was the about the best of any console racing game ever, did you carry that across to Rapid Racer or is the control mechanism completely different?

PJ: A good solution in one game can be very bad in another. Rapid Racer's is definitely more suitable for a water environment.

"...we focus on the end result we're after. We want to make games that we want to play."

PSM: What was the hardest thing to achieve?

PJ: I think it was probably to make a fun game with the water. It's very easy to make a realistic mathematic model, but this makes it very difficult to play with. So we had to make a balance between the dynamics and the fun, as fun was one of the key words we kept in mind while developing the game.

It was also difficult to get it to run at 60 frames per second, particularly with the water moving at the same time, but we are very happy with the result.

PSM: Was there anything in the game that you were not able to achieve?

PJ: Ahhh... (pause) No, not that much, really. When we wanted to achieve something, we found very quickly that the PlayStation could do it, although maybe it wasn't immediately obvious as to how.

In SCEE we focus on the result we want to see. If someone tells me they want to use a particular special effect, we write it down and then work out how we are going to achieve it technically. We don't say "OK, we'll use that part of the PlayStation because it can do this or that", we focus on the end result we're after. We want to make games that we want to play.

PSM: What are your afterthoughts on Porsche Challenge?

PJ: Because it was a licensed game, there were many restrictions. My main disappointment was that we were unable to use any of the other Porsche cars.

PSM: What impressed you most at this year's E3?

PJ: The PlayStation game of the show, for me, is definitely Metal Gear Solid from Konami.

PSM: We have heard that there is a track generator built into the game, can you tell us how it works?

PJ: There are six courses available in day, night or mirror modes. After successful completion in the game, the track generator is made available. Enter a number between 0 and 256,000 and a track will be automatically generated. We consider the track as a loop, and we extend it into four directions - the three dimensions plus the water current, which includes the waves.

The artists got quite jealous because they had spent up to nine months on one track, only to have to re-do it, whereas the PlayStation can generate a new track in a couple of lines of code!

PSM: What's your favourite late night code crunching snack?

PJ: I don't code anymore but when I work late, anything with sugar and vitamins does the job.

PSM: Why do the French produce such good games and not the Germans or the Danes or the Italians?

PJ: Well, I know so many bad French games that I'm surprised by this question! What I can say is:

1) In SCEE's teams we have people from all over Europe.

2) Lots of the good English games are made by small German, Italian or Danish teams. By the way, I'm a European citizen...



Joy Wonders

part 2

It's time once again to pull out our joysticks and get our thumbs stiff and sweaty, as we test the latest batch of PlayStation peripherals. What's available? What do they do? Are they any good and do you really need them? Find out here as the PlayStation Magazine team bend, twist and break the pads (and their fingers) to a pulp.

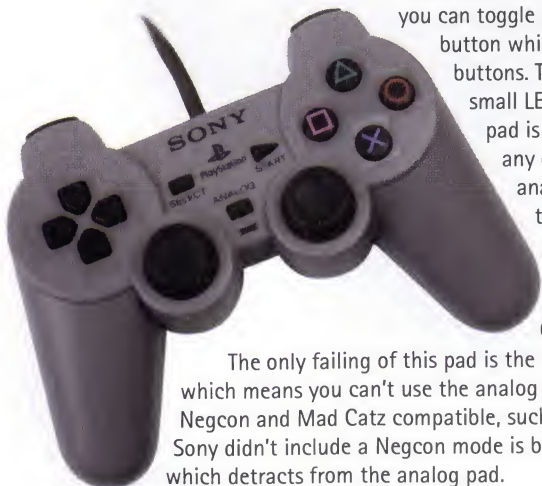
Sony Analog Pad

PRICE:	\$49.95
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All + many new games
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony Computer Entertainment
FEEL:	★★★★★
DESIGN:	★★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★★★

The much anticipated dual analog pad is now available here - minus the vibrating feature found in the Japanese version (see this issue's Feedback for a more detailed explanation). Modelled on the original Sony pad which everyone is familiar with, the analog pad features two circular thumb pads which each provide 360 degree rotation and are used instead of the D pad in many new racing games, especially Porsche Challenge and Rapid Racer. They also click in, activating the L3 and R3 buttons which will be used in many forthcoming games developed especially to take advantage of the pad's new features. The pad is also slightly larger than previous versions, and the L2 and R2 buttons are also bigger and rest more naturally under your fingers. This will be welcomed by all the 'big kids' out there who find the standard ones a bit too small. Overall, it feels a lot more comfortable and solid than any other joypad out there.

The analog pad has three modes of operation, and you can toggle between them by pressing the button which sits beneath the select and start buttons. The current mode is indicated by a small LED light. When the light is out, the pad is in digital mode and works just like any other. The red light means it's in analog pad mode, which activates the two thumb pads, and the green light means the pad is emulating the Sony dual analog joystick, which was designed for games like Ace Combat 2 and MechWarrior 2.

The only failing of this pad is the lack of a Negcon emulation mode, which means you can't use the analog pads with old games that were Negcon and Mad Catz compatible, such as Formula 1 or V-Rally. Why Sony didn't include a Negcon mode is beyond us, and this is the only thing which detracts from the analog pad.



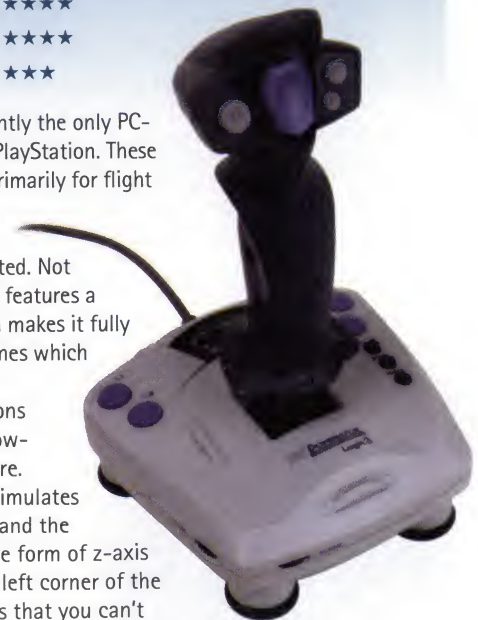
PS Dominator Analogue Joystick

PRICE:	\$79.95
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All analog games
DISTRIBUTOR:	Logic 3
FEEL:	★★★★
DESIGN:	★★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★

The PS Dominator is currently the only PC-style joystick available for the PlayStation. These sort of joysticks are designed primarily for flight sims, but as there aren't many of those on the PlayStation, its use would appear to be limited. Not so, however, for the Dominator features a Negcon emulation mode which makes it fully compatible with all the old games which use the Negcon or Mad Catz.

The stick has all the buttons you'll even need, as well as slow-motion, turbo-fire and auto-fire. When in the analog mode, it simulates the Sony dual analog joystick and the second stick is presented in the form of z-axis and w-axis dials on the lower left corner of the base. The down side of these is that you can't quickly move them around, but this works in your favour if the game you're playing lets you assign throttle controls to these dials; for example in Ace Combat 2 you can set your speed at a constant rate. The circle, square, triangle and X buttons are all within easy reach of your thumb, but the two off to the side are small and a little close together, and sometimes you may accidentally press both at once. The other problem with button position is that the L1/L2 and R1/R2 buttons aren't as accessible as they probably should be. And while we're nit-picking, some of the game freaks in the office commented that the play in the stick was a bit too floppy, but this is really a matter of personal preference.

This joystick is an excellent alternative to the Sony dual analog stick and the fact that it works with all Negcon games is a huge plus. If only there were more decent flying games to play with it!



Blaze Hyper Controller

PRICE:	\$39.95
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All
DISTRIBUTOR:	Action Hi-Tech
FEEL:	★★★
DESIGN:	★★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★★

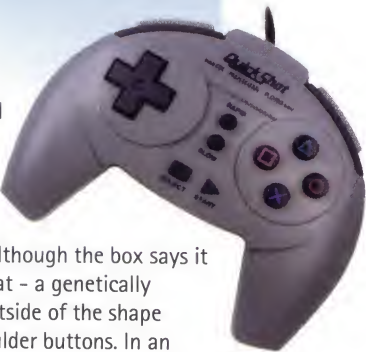


The Hyper Controller from Blaze is almost identical to the standard PlayStation controller. In fact, with the exception of the turbo and slow-motion switches and their respective LEDs, this is an exact replica of the Sony controller. Unfortunately, the Hyper controller is based on the early Japanese models and, as a result, is just a bit too small and only has a short cord. This aside, however, the Hyper controller feels and functions in a fairly similar fashion to the Sony controller, but is just not quite as good. The action buttons on the controller we reviewed were a little spongy but basically fine. The turbo/slow-motion switches may seem unusually located on the underside of the controller, but are suitably placed there to avoid accidental use. It seems that Blaze's main concerns with this controller though, are cosmetic. It comes in many different colours and some interesting transparent models. If you need extra controllers and want something that looks different, you're bound to find one that coordinates with the colours in your games room.



QuickShot StrikePad

PRICE:	\$39.95
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All
DISTRIBUTOR:	Action Hi-Tech
FEEL:	★★
DESIGN:	★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★



The moment we laid eyes on the half-moon shaped QuickShot StrikePad, we were instantly reminded of Sony's asciiPad (and the pain we endured in the process of reviewing it). Well, the StrikePad isn't quite as painful as the asciiPad, but it still bites quite savagely. The basic shape just doesn't feel natural and although the box says it has been ergonomically designed, the question is by what - a genetically engineered monkey with extra finger joints perhaps? Outside of the shape problems, the worst feature of this controller is the shoulder buttons. In an interesting design twist, the L1 and R1 buttons have been set within the L2 and R2 buttons. But the 1 buttons are too thin and very stiff, whilst the 2 buttons are too sloppy. The main action buttons are actually quite good, but the direction pad is also sloppy and doesn't have a precise feel to it. The StrikePad also features the ubiquitous turbo and slow-motion functions, but otherwise there's not really a lot going for this one.

NYKO Power Play Standard PSX controller
NYKO Ultra Play Advanced PSX controller

PRICE:	\$29.95 (both)
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All
DISTRIBUTOR:	Mainstream Interactive
FEEL:	★★★
DESIGN:	★★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★★

With the exception of the turbo and slow-motion features on the Advanced controller, these two controllers are identical. Like the Blaze Hyper controller they appear to have been modelled on the old Japanese Sony pads and thus are a bit smaller than the standard ones. Otherwise, these are essentially good controllers.



The action buttons are nice and chunky and quite responsive. The shoulder L and R buttons also have a nice feel to them. The direction pad under your left thumb is a raised solid cross, more like the old SNES pad, as opposed to the four-way split design on the original Sony pads. The only downside here was that the direction pads on

both controllers were very stiff and, although they'll probably loosen up over time, they were initially pretty tough on the thumbs.

In regards to the extra features on the advanced controller, the turbo and slow-motion functions are fairly standard, with a light for each button becoming lit when that button is in use. The turbo button (which you hold while pressing the button you wish to put into use) is located on the back, directly behind the direction pad. While this makes it easy to activate turbos while playing, we aren't really sure if this is the best place to put it, as it can sometimes be pressed accidentally. These controllers are reasonably cheap and are therefore good options as replacement or extra pads.



Commander MkII Super Joypad

PRICE:	\$19.95
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All
DISTRIBUTOR:	Mainstream Interactive
FEEL:	★★
DESIGN:	★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★

This joypad is a very strange looking beast indeed! It is completely different from any other video game controller we've ever seen. The main difference between this and other control pads is the placement of the buttons. The four action buttons plus the L1 and R1 buttons are laid out in two rows, a la arcade Street Fighter-style, while the L2 and R2 buttons rest under your index fingers on the back of the pad. This configuration is obviously designed with fighting games in mind, and for this purpose it works quite well. The direction pad seems a little bit sloppy at first, but is actually quite responsive and gives good control.

But back to the unusual design of the pad. While the idea behind it is pretty successful, there are a couple of problems. One is that the long hand grips curve back in a bit, and although it isn't immediately obvious, your fingers may begin to feel uncomfortable after a while. The other drawback is that the overall size of the pad isn't suited to people with large hands, so make sure you grab hold of one and see if you like it before you make your purchasing decision. An interesting contender with nice buttons (if a little on the small side), but be prepared to learn a completely new button layout.



DOCS 8 Button Controller

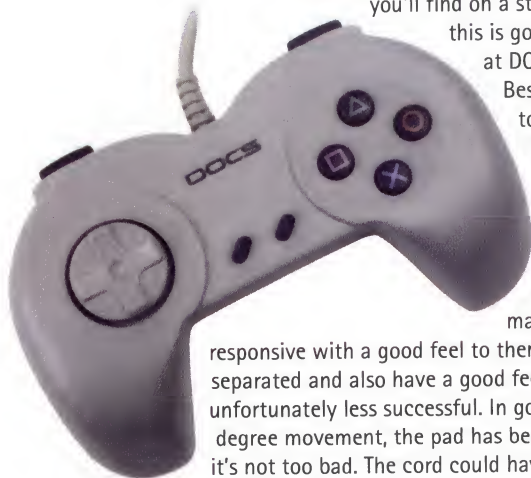
PRICE:	\$19.95
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All
DISTRIBUTOR:	Action Hi-Tech
FEEL:	★★★
DESIGN:	★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★★

It's rare to see a controller these days that hasn't been cluttered up with a plethora of superfluous turbos and other buttons you'll never use, but the DOCS 8 Button Controller is just that. It contains only the buttons you'll find on a standard PlayStation controller and this is good thinking on the part of the people at DOCS. And it helps keep the price down.

Besides, not everyone wants the ability to throw 400 consecutive punches in just 13.6 seconds!

As stated, this controller basically mirrors the design of the standard controller, but with a larger, more chunky design and slightly sturdier construction. The main action buttons are all nice and

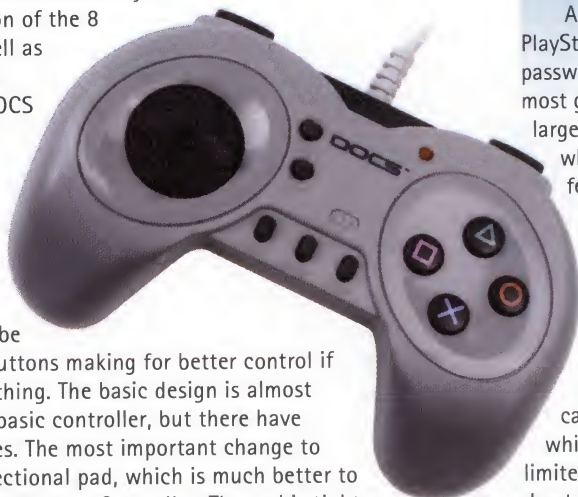
responsive with a good feel to them. The shoulder buttons are well separated and also have a good feel. The directional pad is unfortunately less successful. In going for a more fluid range of 360 degree movement, the pad has become a little difficult to control, but it's not too bad. The cord could have been longer, but this is basically a decent controller, with basic being the operative word.



DOCS Enhanced Controller

PRICE:	\$29.95
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All
DISTRIBUTOR:	Action Hi-Tech
FEEL:	★★★
DESIGN:	★★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★★

The DOCS Enhanced Controller is just that, an enhanced version of the 8 Button Controller. As well as the inevitable turbo and slow-motion buttons, DOCS have also corrected the small faults of their basic controller. The turbo and slow-motion features are handled quite well, with two separate speeds for each and the turbo can be assigned to individual buttons making for better control if you're into that sort of thing. The basic design is almost identical to that of the basic controller, but there have been a couple of changes. The most important change to the controller is the directional pad, which is much better to use than the one on the 8 Button Controller. The pad is tight and precise, yet still allows full 360 degree movement. Strangely, the action and shoulder buttons aren't quite as good as before, but they're not too bad. The cable has also been reinforced at the controller end, which is incidentally a much better length than the 8 Button Controller. Overall, a fairly good effort from DOCS.



DOCS Wireless Controllers

PRICE:	\$99.95 pair
SOFTWARE SUPPORT:	All
DISTRIBUTOR:	Action Hi-Tech
FEEL:	★★★
DESIGN:	★★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★★

If you're sick of tangled cords or if you've ever tripped over your controller cables and almost yanked your console into oblivion, you can appreciate what a good idea wireless controllers are.

Unfortunately, the various wireless controllers released over the years have had problems with transmission and reception of signals. They really just haven't managed to cut it. The DOCS wireless controllers however, appear to succeed where others have failed. The design of this controller is identical to the DOCS Enhanced Controller, with all the same additional features - except the cord, obviously. The important question then, is does the wireless system work well? Fortunately, the answer is yes. You can point these controllers in just about any direction and they still work. You can point them at walls, floors, even at your head without loss of control. They also function well with two controllers operative and there is no slow down in responsiveness. Not bad, not bad at all, but remember that each controller requires two AAA batteries (not included).



Blaze High Capacity Memory Card (8MB)

PRICE:	\$79.95
DISTRIBUTOR:	Action Hi-Tech

A memory card is pretty much an essential purchase for the PlayStation, unless you want to spend half your life entering enormous passwords. For most people, one memory card is more than enough, as most games only require one of the 15 slots. If, however, you have a very large collection of games or play a lot of strategy and/or sport games which chew up the block with loads of statistics, or you simply have a fetish for saving information, you may wish to investigate the Blaze High Capacity Memory Card. This card features eight times the storage potential of a standard memory card with a whopping 120 slots available, all for only double the price of a 15 slot memory card. As the PlayStation can only access one MB of data at a time, the Blaze card functions like eight memory cards in one, with a snazzy LED to show you which page of the card is active. Under limited testing, this card worked fine, however due to the compression techniques used to save the data, apparently sometimes not all 120 slots may be available for use, but it basically looks pretty decent. Probably its most attractive feature is its size: only slightly bigger than a regular card.



Steering Wheels

Being somewhat sceptical about using a controller which seems so big and cumbersome, we anxiously plugged the first steering wheel into our faithful PlayStation and inserted our favourite racing game. While the machine was loading, we set about trying to find a table that was the right height and with sufficient stability. The game has loaded and we still looking. Two milk crates and a plank of wood later, we're set.

Yes, the main problem with all steering wheels is finding somewhere to put them. Most people play games either sitting on a chair of some description or the floor, but you can't rest the wheel on your lap and if you're sitting on the floor how do you use the foot pedals? An couple of ingenious lads up in Queensland have made up a basic stand out of steel and sent us one to try out. Well, gosh darn it, it works! The version we got was very rough and didn't feel particularly sturdy at all, but we've been told that the stand is being redesigned and will be made available nationally soon. For further information, call Choicecraft on (07) 3808 1845.

On a final note, be gentle with your steering wheel. It's not a real car. Learn to steer with your fingers rather than your arms and you'll go faster and get enjoyment from your controller for longer.

Mad Catz PlayStation Analog and Digital Steering Wheel and Foot Pedals

PRICE:	\$159.95 (less in some shops)
DISTRIBUTOR:	HES
FEEL:	★★★
DESIGN:	★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★

As mentioned in a previous issue, the Mad Catz wheel has undergone a minor upgrade and has been repackaged with Sony's blessing. The main changes include a stronger rubber band inside the thing, the option to switch between analog and digital mode, stronger springs in the foot pedals and better cable connections. Apart from that, it is basically the same as before, and can be distinguished from its predecessor by the official PlayStation logos all over the box.

The Mad Catz is designed for people who are after the full racing experience, and if you're serious about it you'll need to have a solid table to sit it on, or a stand such as the one mentioned elsewhere in this article. With the right setup, the combination of wheel and foot pedals is the closest you get at home to the arcade feel most games aim for. Don't expect it to be very realistic, though, as the wheel movement is passive and feels the same whether you're going around a corner at 60kph or 260kph. It's very cool when it's all set up properly, but you might like to take it for a test drive, so to speak, before you shell out your cash.



VRF-I Arcade Steering Wheel

PRICE:	\$159.95 (less in some shops)
DISTRIBUTOR:	Action Hi-Tech
FEEL:	★★★★
DESIGN:	★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★

Unlike the Mad Catz, the VRF 1 does not come with any pedals, so the accelerator and brake buttons are mounted on the face of the wheel. Both are in comfortable positions and are well-sprung, giving a good feel of analog progression. We found the brake button a little awkward to find when flying down a straight at 200kph, but once again the progressiveness of the braking was so well tuned that after a few laps we were racking up speeds like Schumacher senior.



Although the button layout on the face of the wheel is pretty good, the buttons which are underneath are very sensitive, so much so that if you're really heavy-handed, you're gonna be flicking through view changes so fast your head will spin!

This wheel is tilt adjustable to three positions and also has a self-centring spring-loaded mechanism which is really helpful if you learn to use it properly. With this wheel, you should find yourself driving faster and with more precision. We were rather proud of our lap times in Porsche Challenge, but after just two laps using this controller, we'd beaten our previous best lap time by two seconds. With results like that, you'd expect to see the VRF 1 on a few F1 cars next season!



Light Guns

Sitting at home shooting at your TV is about the most fun you can have these days – just ask Elvis – and these light guns give you the opportunity to do just that, but without the tiresome task of having to buy a new TV set after each shot. There are now a few light guns on the market, but the problem remains that there aren't very many gun games around to use them on.

There are a couple of things to keep in mind when using any light gun: 1. The bigger the TV the better; 2. Prolonged use will tire out your arm quite a bit; 3. Light guns don't work with 100Hz televisions, so if you have one you must manually switch it to 50/60Hz.

Konami Hyper Blaster

PRICE:	\$69.95
DISTRIBUTOR:	Mainstream Interactive
FEEL:	★★★★
DESIGN:	★★★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★★

Konami is one of the better known game publishers in Japan and has had a string of high quality games to its name over the years. The Hyper Blaster is one of the better light guns around and is very accurate and well constructed.

The Start button and the auxiliary button (for extra weapons like rockets and grenades) are small and flush with the outer casing, and are within relatively easy reach of your thumb, so you don't have to use both hands to operate them (unless you have small hands).

Before we tested the guns we assumed that the Hyper Blaster would be one of the best, but after extended use we found a few things we didn't particularly like about it. The trigger action has far too much slack in it, meaning that you have to squeeze it back about half a centimetre or so before it clicks in and fires. This, combined with the very light weight of the gun, means that it's hard to hold a steady bead on a target as the gun tends to sway around a bit when you're firing rapidly. Nevertheless, it is very accurate and should prove to be reliable for its lifespan.

NYKO Cobra Gun

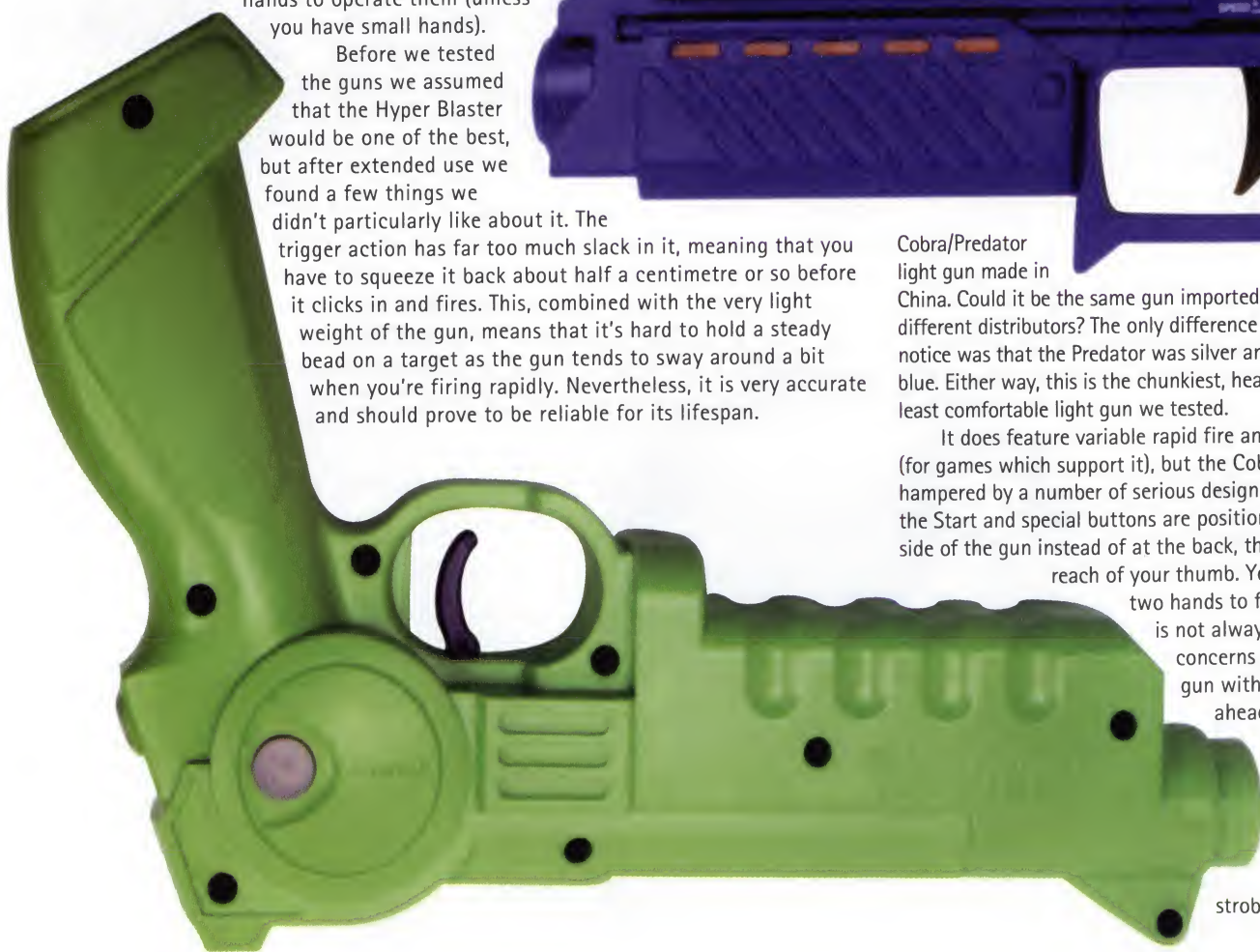
PRICE:	\$69.95
DISTRIBUTOR:	Mainstream Interactive
FEEL:	★★
DESIGN:	★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★

Hmm... This looks familiar. Suspiciously similar to the Logic 3 Predator gun we tested in issue #3. NYKO – USA company. Logic 3 – UK company.



Cobra/Predator light gun made in China. Could it be the same gun imported by and from different distributors? The only difference we could notice was that the Predator was silver and the Cobra is blue. Either way, this is the chunkiest, heaviest and least comfortable light gun we tested.

It does feature variable rapid fire and auto reload (for games which support it), but the Cobra gun is hampered by a number of serious design flaws. Firstly, the Start and special buttons are positioned on the side of the gun instead of at the back, thus out of reach of your thumb. You have to use two hands to fire them, which is not always convenient. The second problem concerns the angle of the grip. If you grip the gun with your eyes closed and point it dead ahead, when you open your eyes you will find the gun pointing slightly up. Maybe some people won't notice this, but we found it slightly irritating. About the only thing in this gun's favour is the row of flashing lights down each side which strobe every time a shot is fired. Wow.



Honey Bee Laser Gun

PRICE:	\$49.95
DISTRIBUTOR:	Action Hi-Tech
FEEL:	★★★★★
DESIGN:	★★★★
CONSTRUCTION:	★★★★

At this price point, the Honey Bee light gun is definitely the most affordable pistola for your shooting pleasure. Better still, it's considerably lighter than the Cobra/Predator gun (it does make a difference), as well as



being more accurate. Sporting an extra 'thumb button' on the rear it's perfect for launching those missiles and grenades in Die Hard Trilogy, or other light gun games that sport multiple weapons. There's also a pointy lump of plastic sticking out beneath the thumb button which appears to serve no purpose whatsoever.

The gun is compact and well shaped. It's comfortable to hold and the trigger clicks in with very little travel, allowing rapid semi-automatic firing as fast as you can flinch your finger. The two stage trigger (it clicks a second time when more pressure is applied) will provide turbo fire and auto reload if held in position - as long as the specific game supports the function (Die Hard didn't). Although not pinpoint accurate, it's nevertheless a good performer and certainly the best light gun available locally at the moment.

Namco G-Con.45

PRICE:	\$109.95 including Time Crisis game
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony Computer Entertainment

The Namco G-Con.45 won't be available in Australia until November and will be packaged with Time Crisis. Namco also has another arcade conversion on the way called Point Blank (also known as Gun Bullit), which is a fun side show-style shooter.

NOTICE: The Namco G-Con.45 is not compatible with games which don't officially support it (ie. all the ones that are currently available). So basically it only works with Time Crisis and Point Blank. The other thing is that none of the other guns will work with Time Crisis (we haven't tested them with Point Blank yet),

which seems rather selfish on Namco's behalf - after all, there's more guns



available than there are games to shoot! We'll have a full report when we see the

official Australian version, which may differ in specifications and colour from the Japanese one pictured here.

We played the Japanese version of Time Crisis with the G-Con.45 and can report that it is very accurate and has a good, solid feel. If you're a freak who has a Japanese machine, then you should add the gun and the game to your collection without hesitation. The rest of us with Aussie machines will have to wait until November.



* Namco G-Con.45 Japanese model shown. Colour and specifications of Australian model may differ

Suggested Shooting



We can only think of three games already available: Die Hard Trilogy (pictured on the left), by Fox Interactive; Area 51, by GT Interactive; and Crypt Killer (right) from Konami. Of these three, Die Hard Trilogy is by far the best, and is the one we return to without hesitation whenever we feel like a bit of vigilantism.



WIN *Rapid Racer and a Sony Analog Pad*



Rapid Racer is the slickest racing game to grace the PlayStation, and it's even smoother with a Sony Analog Pad. Well readers, it must be your lucky day, because it just so happens that Sony has kindly given us six copies of Rapid Racer and six Analog Pads to give away!

We know you want to win real bad, so we're going to make it easy for you. All you have to do is answer this simple question.

Q: Rapid Racer is made by Sony's internal UK development team. What was the last racing game they made?

The answer will be a doddle for anyone who's read our feature on the making of Rapid Racer on page 24, and once you work it out write it down on the back of an envelope and send it to:

**Rapido Amigo Comp
PlayStation Magazine
78 Renwick St
Redfern, NSW 2016**



Conditions of entry: 1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand. 2. Entries must be received by October 8, 1997. 3. Employees of Next Media and Sony Computer Entertainment may not enter. 4. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into.

Official Australian PlayStation Magazine Ratings Guide

Every game featured in our Play Test section has been reviewed independently and objectively by our team of writers. We aim to give you an informed idea of what the game is about and, most importantly, whether it's good or bad.

Each title reviewed receives an overall score out of 10 which should be seen in the context of the type of game and in relation to similar titles it's competing with. For example; a score of 7 is high praise for a 16-bit style 2D platform game, whereas a 3D fighting game receiving the same score is by no means sub standard, but indicates that it could have been better when seen next to the likes of Tekken 2 and Tobal No.1.

Additionally, the following factors are awarded up to five stars

- Graphics** - Does the game look good and has it taken advantage of the technology?
- Sound** - CDs give developers the potential to create mind blowing audio. Have they?
- Gameplay** - This is what it boils down to. Is the game any good to play?
- Lifespan** - Will you still be playing the game next week or next year?
- Originality** - Does this game offer anything new or is it a clone of last month's hit?

- 10** - Amazing! Unbelievable! In a class of its own!
- 9** - High quality game, strongly recommended
- 8** - Well above average, more than worthy of attention
- 7** - A good game with little to complain about
- 6** - A bit on the average side, but not at all bad
- 5** - Not quite as good as it could have been
- 4** - This is not what you bought a PlayStation for!
- 3** - Oh dear, something has gone horribly wrong...
- 2** - Don't bother, a waste of both time and money
- 1** - Impress your friends with a cool black drink coaster!

Difficulty: A rough idea of the degree of difficulty to expect when you initially play the game, however most give you the option to tamper with the skill level.

Players: Number of players supported. Any more than two and you'll need a Multitap four-player adaptor, unless...

Link-Up: Two PlayStations and (usually) two copies of the game are required. And don't forget the extra TV.

Control: The standard joystick works with all games, although many recent titles take advantage of analogue devices (Negcon, Mad Catz) or the PlayStation Mouse

Memory Card: Some games require a memory card to save secret things and newly discovered levels or circuits. Other games provide you with a password to jot down.

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Rapid Racer

Warning: Players in the front rows WILL get wet. Remember, no eating, drinking, farting or other bodily functions permitted on this ride. Andrew Iredale was first in line for a ticket.

PUBLISHER:	SCEE
DEVELOPER:	Sony Internal
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	October
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
DIFFICULTY:	Progressive
PLAYERS:	One or two
LINK UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Analogue
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	G



You can play each track in day and night modes (pics on left) and mirror mode. Bow-cam (big pic) is like being strapped to the deck of the boat!



A simple, yet very stylish rendered introductory sequence ushers in the game.

Wow, another racing game for the PlayStation! Do we really need another one? We had barely recovered from the stunning V-Rally when Sony told us they've got an even better racing game on the way. Really, the things we have to put up with...

We must admit that we really had been looking forward to Rapid Racer. We saw a video of it ages ago and were blown away by its smoothness. "60 frames per second!" we were told, and it sure did look it. Oh, and the possibility of hooning down raging rivers in a speed boat was very attractive to us.

You start the game with a choice of three boats and three tracks to race on. As you win races, you progress through

the faster boats and the more treacherous courses. There are three versions of each course: during the day, which is the easiest; at night, which is not only dark, but has a different power-up layout and harder opponents; and in mirror mode, which is totally confusing at first and even harder, but different enough from the regular mode to make them worthy of being a new tracks in their own right. The new boats are obviously faster and have better handling, and you are granted access to them after fully upgrading the old one. Upgrades are available by beating the bonus stage after winning a race, and you have a choice of enhancing either you acceleration, top speed or handling.

And then there are a few extras...

When you take to the water for the first time, it feels kind of strange. The boat seems to steer funny, and at times it feels like you're dragging an anchor. After a few laps, you start to understand the way the boats handle, then you begin to notice the subtle movements in the water. There are channels that you can slide your hull into, which take you along a smooth, clean line, but watch out for other boats trying to do the same. There is also an unrelenting surging motion which makes each lap different and unpredictable. Once you've built up a bit of speed and let loose with a turbo, you can skim across the water surface at a rate approaching that of Wipeout 2097.



Using a turbo gives you a much-needed burst of speed (big pic). The two-player game (pics at right) is great fun with a mate.



More of that tasty intro!

You really get the feeling of carving through the water at an almost uncontrollable rate of knots, and that's what makes this game so satisfying when you get the hang of it. The size of the swell is affected by the difficulty level you are playing in. On easy the water is relatively flat, but on the hard setting you'll be hitting the waves fairly heavily and bouncing around a bit. It's not all plain sailing, though, because to give you the rapids to race down, the track designers have had to include up-hill sections to get back up. Hitting a backward flowing current can cause a drastic loss in speed, so you have to plan your line carefully and make judicious use of the turbos.

Your computer controlled opponents are by no means easy to beat. They jostle with each other and yourself for the best racing line, and don't hesitate to pick up and make use of any power-ups in their path. There's nothing more infuriating in this game than to be struggling against the tide on the last lap and to see the boat ahead of you cut across your path to steal that turbo you had your eye on! The other boats won't always take the same path as you do which makes for very close racing, with the lead changing at every corner. The competition from the other boats never lets up, and on the harder levels you'll have them breathing

down your neck all the way to the chequered flag - assuming you can get past them in the first place.

Rapid Racer has a more than welcome two-player split-screen, which is surprisingly good. There is little loss in either speed or detail, and you have the option of racing against just your friend, or against a couple of computer-guided boats as well. Either way, the two-player races can be a real hoot, as you both flounder around in each other's wake and try to push the other player into the river bank!

Graphically, it is very hard to find fault with Rapid Racer. The 60-fps refresh rate makes a big difference, not only to the appearance, but also to the responsiveness of the control. Even with a standard digital joypad, Rapid Racer has about the best and most intuitive feel of any game since Wipeout 2097. The look of the water is truly amazing. It does look a bit weird and streaky in the static screen shots, but when you see in motion you can fully appreciate its effectiveness. There's also a surprising amount of detail in the backgrounds, and although some of the bigger objects like bridges and gateways distort a bit as you rock from side to side, they hold together quite solidly and add significantly to the settings of each course.

Special mention must be made of

the soundtrack of the game, which is produced by the group Apollo Four Forty. All the tracks seem to suit the game perfectly, and it's nice to have professional musicians doing the score for a change! Of course, the purists who like to race to the sound of their own engines revving away and the rush of the water beneath have the option of hearing these effects only, but you may want to turn them up if you have the music playing as well.

Overall, Rapid Racer is an extremely well-rounded racing game. There is enough variety in the courses to keep you busy for quite a while, and no matter how good or bad you are at racing, you're bound to have fun doing it. If you've been overwhelmed by the quantity of good driving games around at the moment and you want something new, Rapid Racer is about as fresh as you can get.



Alternatives

There's plenty of top racing games around at the moment, but V-Rally, Formula 1 '97 and Porsche Challenge are among the best.



■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	So silky the joypad will slide from your hands!
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Excellent music and fairly good effects
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★	Heaps of depth and heaps of fun!
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	It will take quite a while to tire of this game
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★	A racing game with a difference? Surely not!

■ OVERALL: *Rapid Racer* redefines the racing genre on the PlayStation. You may never want to drive anything with wheels again!

9

OUT OF TEN

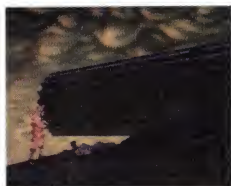
Hercules

Remember the good ol' 16-bit days when every second title was a side-scrolling 2D platform game? Disney produced some of the better ones, and here's its first 32-bit effort. **Nick Smith** checks it out.

PUBLISHER:	Disney Interactive
DEVELOPER:	Virgin
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Platform
DIFFICULTY:	Easy
NO. OF PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROL:	Standard
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



Remember the old Hercules cartoon's theme song? Sing along now! "With the strength of ten, ordin-ary men, it's the might-ee Hercules!"



Haven't seen the movie yet? Don't worry, the game is filled with lots of nice cut scenes which tell the story.



gameplay, style, look, and graphics. Hercules is the culmination of all previous efforts, and by the looks of things has just the right mix of platform basics which make for a satisfying and often really funny game.

Hercules is, of course, based in ancient Greece, and is the first mythological story to get the Disney treatment. The story follows Hercules, son of Zeus, as he tries to prove his worth to the Gods, defeating Hades in his plot to take control of Mount Olympus.

The game takes Hercules through 10 levels of gameplay, and the story unfolds as you progress through the stages with key action sequences taken from the movie. I found this really added

a unique depth to the game - where the animated scenes left off is exactly where you take control of Hercules and continue his quest.

The stages are played in either a 2D or 3D environment. The 3D levels are played similarly to those in Crash Bandicoot. You run up through a vertically scrolling scene and the obstacles and enemies come to you. I found that it took a while to get used to the perspective of the oncoming objects, but after adjusting, was able to live with it.

The creative team worked closely in conjunction with the artists to keep the look and integrity of the film in the game. The stages are completely different in



The first level is an easy training stage in which Herc's opponents are real dummies! (left) Fly Pegasus, fly! Fly like you know horses aren't supposed to!



look and layout with great looking backgrounds and characters in each, taking you from the Centaur's Forest, to Ancient Greece (aptly named the Big Olive), on to Medusa's Lair and the Vortex of Souls. The animation too excels, boasting around 10,000 frames of hand-drawn animation as Hercules runs, jumps, swings and punches his way through the game.

All his foes from the movie make appearances as either midway or end of level bosses. Some of them have to be seen to be believed such as the Hydra, which starts off easily enough but quickly accrues a head count of no less

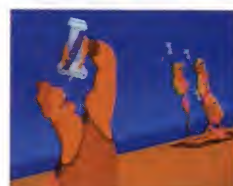
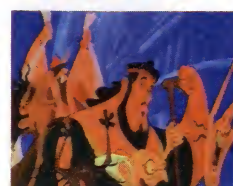
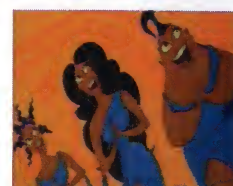
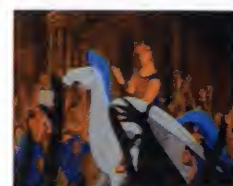
than nine! Medusa looks great as well and is probably the most impressive in regards to both strategy and looks. The other bosses range from the average like the Minotaur and Centaur to the toughest like taking on all the Titans during one level.

Gameplay is polished with fun, no fuss controls. Most of the stages are fairly lengthy and well laid out. Hercules can defeat the enemies by using his sword or by punching them, although the punching is barely used at all. Our hero does, however, have a power punch that can be wound up and released to destroy objects in his path.



He also has a ground slam move which is used to reveal hidden areas in pathways that are usually fairly easily discovered by their slightly different look. These special abilities are generally used to further progress through the rounds, rather than for discovering secret areas and it seemed to me that they were added to make the game a little more interactive.

Disney's game releases are great, as I'd seen from past releases, and it's good to see them not slacking off, despite knowing whatever they produce will sell. Hercules will appeal to more than just the fans of the movie.



The sure knew how to party in the olden days!

Pick it up and hit someone with it!

Armed with his trusty sword, Hercules can easily vanquish most of his enemies. Along the way he may find gifts from the gods in the form of power-ups, bestowing limited special powers to his sword. These include:
Lightning - Point your sword and fry anything in its path - just like the mozzie zapper in Quake!
Flame- heat-seeking fireballs for taking out those pesky enemies which just won't keep still.
Thunder- emits a powerful sonic explosion, destroying anything in close range.

Other items can also be found along the way, left by defeated enemies, or hidden in or around different scenery.

Letters - Find the letters to spell our hero's name and be rewarded with a continue.

Helmets- These grant you invulnerability for a short time. Can be saved for later use.

Vases - these are hidden throughout the stages. If four are found by the end of the stage, you are given a password and the opportunity to save your game.

Herculade - replaces lost energy

Hercules Action Figure - Extends your energy bar

Sandals- Give Herc a burst of speed



Alternatives

Hercules has more in common with 16-bit titles such as Aladdin and The Lion King than it does with most current PlayStation games.

■ GRAPHICS: ★★★★★

■ SOUND: ★★★★★

■ GAMEPLAY: ★★★

■ LIFESPAN: ★★★

■ ORIGINALITY: ★★

Beautiful, smooth 2D animation

Jazzy tunes and cool speech

A well-rounded platform game

Fun, but perhaps too easy to finish

Follows the classic platform game formula

■ OVERALL: *Hercules* is a lot of fun, but you may find it a little too easy to finish, even on the higher difficulty setting. Still, a perfect game for younger players.

7

OUT OF TEN

PaRappa The Rapper

A game about rapping dogs, rasta frogs, funky driving instructors and an onion-headed kung-fu master. *The Black Pig* gets down and funky for some freestyle, block-rockin' beats. Word up, Gee!

PUBLISHER:	Sony
DEVELOPER:	Sony Japan
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	August
PRICE:	\$69.95
GAME TYPE:	Funky
DIFFICULTY:	Easy
NO. OF PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROL:	Standard
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Crazy as it may sound, there is a story to this game!

PaRappa The Rapper is without question one of the most bizarre games we have ever seen. In fact, this game is about as weird as anything you'll ever see on your TV screen. So what's the deal with PaRappa? Why do we think it's so cool? Have we lost the plot completely? One of the reasons why PaRappa is so fun is because it doesn't play like any other video game in existence before it.

The game follows the misadventures of PaRappa, a small cartoon dog. Over the course of the game, he has to pit his rapping skills against various bizarre cartoon opponents, all to try and win the heart of the girl of his dreams, Sunny Funny, who happens to be a strange sort of walking, talking flower. Throughout PaRappa's adventure he is also joined by his buddy P.J. Berri (a DJ bear) and his girl, Katy Kat. And that's about it. The bulk of the game is made up of a series of long animated cut scenes starring these four funky freaks as they go on a series of crazy escapades involving fast food restaurants, dangerous driving, night clubs and, ultimately, a hip hop concert. These sequences really epitomise the strange but cool flavour of the game. The fine graphics and sound, in addition to the truly off-beat sense of humour, will ensure that you sit there watching them incredulously a few times at least. Some, such as the hysterical scene in the country when PaRappa discovers that he urgently needs to find a toilet, will certainly require repeated viewing.

The main point of the game (to get back to it) is, of course, the rapping and this is where the fun really starts. Rapping in a video game is something which could have gone horribly wrong in a number of ways. But in PaRappa, the



rapping mechanism is quite simple and manages to blend-in seamlessly with the rest of the game. In the controllable rapping sections (which add up to a total of a little over 16 minutes), various buttons are used to represent the individual words or syllables in each line. A 'beat' bar appears at the top of the screen which has a ball moving over the square, circle, triangle, X, L and R buttons, and you simply have to press the right button at the right time. What happens is that the character you are competing against raps a line, you repeat it, and so on. At first the rapping is fairly simple, but by the end - when you have to rap first and at high speed - it can get quite tricky.

That said, most people should be able to finish PaRappa in a couple of hours. Challenging it is not, but fun it most certainly is! To add to the long-term appeal of the game, once you have successfully completed a stage and saved

it, you may return and try to rap cool. This is generally accomplished by rapping more than is required (repeating the last word or two at the end of a line) and generally keeping your rap consistently smooth. If you can get the meter to cool early enough in a level, your teacher will disappear and you'll get to indulge in an extended free style rap. This is, of course, where the game rocks the hardest. Once you get a cool indulgence session to happen, you'll be rushing back to do it again and impress your friends with your sense of rhythm and style!

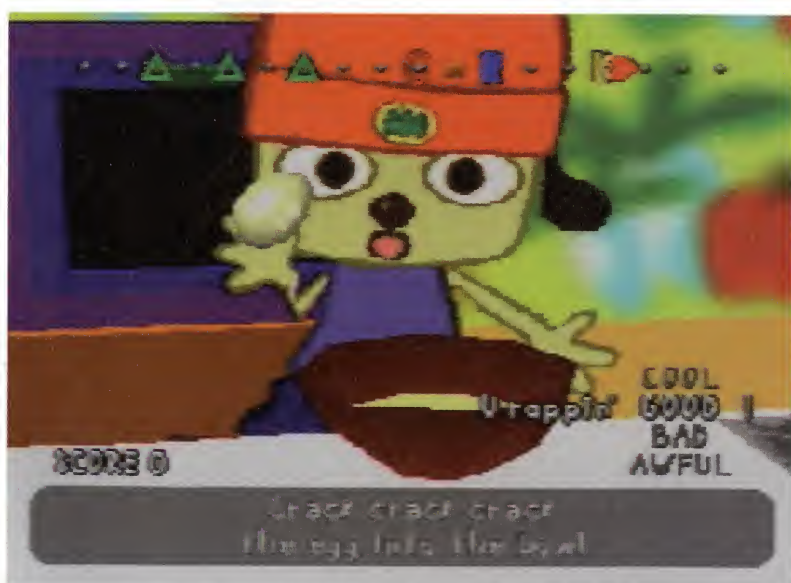
The main thing which makes the raps so good is that all the characters are immediately likeable and their voices are suitably cool, too. Your opponents in the six stages include Rap Master Onion Head, a kung fu instructor; Instructor Mooselini, who takes PaRappa on his driving test; Prince Fleaswallow, a Rastafarian frog (very, very cool!!); and a rapping chicken who hosts her own TV



If you're good enough, you may be able to rap cool (bottom left). MCK.K. Mushi takes the stage for PaRappa's final performance (above).



PaRappa especially enjoyable, as it is the sort of game that seems to have been designed as a babysitter. Of course, this also means that parents trapped in the same house will quickly be driven insane! Meanwhile, other people will stand back and find it hard to understand what on Earth is so appealing about such a mindless and repetitive game. There will be no middle ground: you will either love and cherish PaRappa forever, or demote it to coaster status. Either way, you simply must experience a game of PaRappa before you make up your mind! Due to the lack of an on-going challenge (other than that provided by your own persistence), PaRappa is the perfect game to rent for the weekend and invite all your like-minded friends over for a group therapy session.



There is no alternative!
You must play PaRappa!
Actually, there is a game
called "Quest For Fame"
possibly coming out soon,
which is sort of a
Wayne's World version of
PaRappa. We kid you not.

- **OVERALL:** *PaRappa The Rapper* is the freshest game we've seen in a long time and, despite the lack of anything substantial in terms of actual gameplay, it's certainly something worth experiencing.

8
OUT OF TEN

Rosco McQueen

Rosco McQueen is Sony's latest 3D platform game. It is about an apartment block burning to the ground. Adrian Bertram lives in a fire trap, so we thought he was perfect to review it!

PUBLISHER:	Sony
DEVELOPER:	Slippery Snake
DISTRIBUTOR:	Sony
RELEASE:	October
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	3D platform
DIFFICULTY:	Moderate
NO. OF PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROL:	Standard
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	TBA



Ah, to be a fire-fighter. What is it that makes this such a common daydream for youngsters? Is it the urge to gain mastery over the most ruthless of elements? Is it a fascination with fire trucks and those wacky helmets? Or is it in reality just a Freudian compulsion to play with hoses? Regardless of your reasons, the good people at Slippery Snake Studio (there's that Freud bugger again!) have given gamers around the world a chance to play fire-fighter once more in their new 3D action/platformer, Rosco McQueen. For those who are dubious about the appeal of a fire-fighting game, let me assure you, this game is cool.

In the game, you control the man himself - Rosco McQueen, a hero of truly Aristotelian proportions, hewn from the living rock of cartoon superhero tradition. Rosco McQueen has the style, panache and wisdom of Doc Savage (Man of Bronze) coupled with the chin of Roger Ramjet and the hosing abilities of Dumbo. Truly a force to be reckoned with. During the game you are joined by Digit, your robot sidekick, who teleports trapped people from the burning ruins. Your objectives are fairly simple: destroy



What do you mean the fire sound is frighteningly realistic? You reviewed a version without sound!

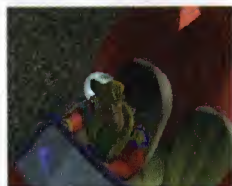
all the other robots, put out the fires they light and rescue trapped victims. This simple formula pays off in spades when viewed in action. The levels are fairly linear, but there are lots of secret rooms, and putting the fires out is not just a case of pushing a button and waiting for them to extinguish. The thing about the fires in this game is that they actually behave like fires. They spread, they catch again, cinders fly and set additional fires which also have to be put out etc. When you consider the challenge these fires present in addition to several mean robots per level and the possibility of the whole building blowing up, Rosco McQueen becomes a challenging, action-

packed game.

A simple formula action game like this, however, cannot survive on the strength of its concept alone. Fortunately, Rosco McQueen has excellent production across the board. The graphics in Rosco are particularly good, even if the third-person perspective is beginning to look slightly familiar. The levels all have that familiar warehouse look to them, but they do come in lots of different shapes and sizes with various themes for levels such as a laundry and a car park.

Rosco and Digit have an appropriate cartoon feel about them and are superbly animated. Unlike many other games, even when Rosco is running full tilt down corridors, there's no real problem with pop-up and shuddering. The fires are also particularly good looking and are composed of separate portions instead of the usual blob of fire. While the standard pink robots will just inspire blood lust, the boss robots and the various sub-bosses look cool and justifiably so.

Rosco McQueen's fine graphics are well backed up with equally impressive



*Here comes Rosco McQueen!
He's always the first man on the scene!*



Hey Adrian, is that a fire alarm I can hear? Of course not! Silly me, I forgot that all your smoke detectors have been painted over!





sound design and execution. All of the effects in Rosco are quite realistic and the crackle of the fires are chillingly so. Added to all of this is quite a funky soundtrack. No atmospherics here, just beat and grooves. While it may not be the sort of thing that pleases real live guitar rock dogs, it's not too shabby at all.

As you journey through the various levels, your only companions (besides Digit, of course) are a whopping great axe and your trusty hose, and these are all you really need for most of the game. For special situations, there are extra weapons to collect such as throwing axes, as well as additional fire fighting aids such as CO2 and water bombs. In a move which is common (but bugs me all the same), you can't take your items to

the next stage. Besides these concerns, you also have to monitor and maintain the supply of water for your hose, which can provide difficulties if you run out just before you completely extinguish the flames, only to return with more water to find the fire has again become a blazing inferno.

Control of Rosco's movement and various actions is smoothly handled, if a little too quick for really precise control. This is more due to the fact that the producers want the game to be fast, thus requiring extra buttons to slow Rosco down, instead of vice versa. This is a good thing, as to be successful in this game you'll need to be running around in a frenzy, as opposed to slowly lining up for that nasty looking jump.



Hey, ain't that a portrait of crazy old uncle Jeb? Gosh darn it! It is!



Rosco includes some platform elements for a bit of spice, but has a feel more akin to a Doom-style game save for the third-person view. There are lots of corridors and rooms, bad guys to kill, switches to open doors or activate platforms etc. Unfortunately, this is where some of the problems with Rosco creep in. Regardless of aesthetic differences between the various stages, there's a certain fundamental similarity to both the appearance and the purpose of most of the levels. It's still good fun, but after a while you suddenly realise you've just done something almost exactly the same as something on a previous stage. Also, you only get the opportunity to save your game once per level which is, in my opinion, not often enough (each level consists of up to nine or 10 stages, each containing a handful of rooms). So, it's a case of "B-b-but I was just about to walk through the door to the next level, but that stupid pink robot hit me and now I've gotta do all that over again from the beginning of the *\$%^#@! level!"

Rosco McQueen's strength as a game lies in the combination of all its component parts, rather than from a focus on any of its best features. In addition to this solid base, Rosco also incorporates some nice touches throughout the game such as the health meter and the initial options screen. The health meter is a cool picture of Rosco which loses fleshy matter as Rosco suffers, until only his bare skull is visible at the point of death. As for the option screen, it's a tastily rendered hotel lobby with concierge's desk and bizarre advertising. It may not sound like a big deal, but it's a hell of a lot more interesting than moving a cursor up and down a list.

In the end, some people may not understand the appeal of Rosco. I'll admit I was very sceptical myself at first, but Rosco is great fun. After not very long I found myself almost catatonic in front of the TV with the cry of the addicted echoing around my house - "Damn, why the hell did that happen? Oh well, I guess I'll just grab my hose (he, he) and give it just one more go. I'm sure I'll beat this level this time, or at least be in a position to know why I didn't. D'oh!"



Time to pull out the fire hose, eh readers!

Alternatives

Similar in style to *Tomb Raider*, *Joe Blow*, *Gex 3D*, *Croc*, etc.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Smooth, colourful and the biggest 3D chin ever
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Pretty good music, excellent effects
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	Ultimately limited, but pretty good nonetheless
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	Fairly challenging, but you may lose interest
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Different, yet somehow reminiscent of others

■ OVERALL: *Rosco McQueen* offers fun, fast-paced action for those after something a bit different in an action game.

8

OUT OF TEN

Formula 1 '97

Formula 1 is back for 1997, promising a host of new features and upgrades. Fangio Iredale has been anxiously pumping the accelerator in anticipation of this one!

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
DEVELOPER:	Bizarre
DISTRIBUTOR:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	September
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Driving
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	Two split-screen
LINK UP:	No
CONTROL:	Negcon
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	G



For those who complained about the lack of a cockpit view in the first game, this is for you.

If you're a big fan of Formula 1 and have been hanging out for this updated version, don't bother reading the rest of this review. Go out and buy the game right now, you'll love it. However, if you're the cautious type who likes to know exactly what you're getting before you rush off and spend your hard earned cash, keep reading.

The original Formula 1 game was something special. It was the first PlayStation game that was a step above everything else on the market at the time. It looked good, it was very fast and had a great driving 'feel' to it. Sure, it had its share of faults, and was by no means the realistic simulation some people had hoped it would be, but as an arcade-style

racing game it was just delicious. Now the sequel's here, a little over a year since the first game's release, and the question waiting to be answered is does it offer enough of an improvement to make it worth buying?

For most players, the only thing really missing from F1 was the lack of a two-player split-screen mode. There was the link-up option, but this isn't something most PlayStation owners get the chance to do often, if at all. F1 '97 remedies this situation with the choice of either vertical or horizontal split-screen modes, depending on the way you'd rather look at it all. While on the subject of cosmetic options, we discovered one that lets you turn the



lens flare on or off! But back to the two-player mode, as there is something about it you should aware of. When it says two-player, it means exactly that - just the two of you. No other competitors are on the track, so if one player is much better at the game than the other, the slow driver is unlikely to see much of the fast one after the first corner. The fact that there is no other traffic means that there's nothing to slow the good driver down, other than his own ineptitude. This obviously won't be so much of a problem when both players are familiar with the game, but racing together against the entire field would have been much more fun.

In the single-player mode, your opponents are now much more varied and realistic in their actions and driving styles. Each different driver has his own personality, which may be aggressive or passive, and this affects how they behave when you're trying to get past them. Some get out of your way at the first sign of an impending collision, others don't do much at all, and an ill-mannered few will actively go out of their way to block your path past them. You'll also find the other drivers trying to pass you, something virtually unheard of in a video game.

The graphics for this new game have been completely redone in a higher level of resolution, and some of the smoke and weather effects (especially the rain) are pretty darn convincing. The conditions may now change throughout the race, so if you start on slicks and the heavens open up, you're going to be in trouble. Other major improvements to the graphics are mostly concerned with



Now there are spectacular crashes to enjoy!



Hooray! Now there's a two-player split-screen mode so you can prove your skills to your friends once and for all.





the level of detail on the cars and track-side scenery. At first glance, F1 '97 doesn't look much different from the first game, but when you compare it against its predecessor, the improvements are quite obvious.

Complementing the better graphics is a new and improved soundtrack. Gone are the soft-rock guitars wailing in the background, replaced by a selection of chilled-out techno/breakbeat tracks for the arcade mode and moody orchestral pieces for the simulation mode. The slick soundtracks fit in perfectly with the equally smooth presentation of the game in general.

And, of course, Mad Murray's back, along with his sidekick, the former F1 driver Martin Brundle. There's apparently three times the number of quips and phrases spouting out of Murray's mighty mouth, but luckily there is the option to regulate the frequency of his verbal outbursts.

Formula 1 '97 now sports the much requested cockpit view showing the driver's hands on the wheel, although his arms do have a rather surreal appearance. One problem which I did find affected all the viewing angles, however, was the distance at which the

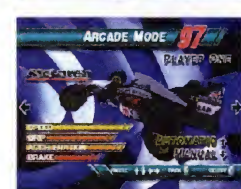
track is drawn into the distance. The road and its immediate surroundings look great, but until you learn the layout of each track and know where and when to expect the corners, you'll find the road suddenly veering off before you've had a chance to line up the turn. Admittedly, this was only an annoyance while I was trying to learn the layout of each track, but perhaps the developers could have sacrificed a little of the incidental details on the buildings and so-forth for a bit more of an indication of which way the track's going.

Although the graphics are running in the PlayStation's hi-res mode, there is an awful lot of break-up and flickering of polygons in the mid-to-long distance range. The other thing I occasionally noticed, especially at the



start of the race when lots of cars are in view, was that sometimes one of them would suddenly disappear for a second. It would always come back before you got too close to it, but the fact that it happens is an indication of the intense graphic load the PlayStation has to deal with. Again, perhaps dropping the detail could have made things run a little more smoothly.

So, does Formula 1 '97 qualify as a new game in its own right, or is it just an updated version of its predecessor? Well, technically it's a new game and the hi-res graphics certainly look good - most of the time. But when it comes down to the nitty gritty, F1 '97 is very similar to the first game. As I said at the start of this review, dedicated F1 fans will love it - there's just so many options and features to play around with. If you want to change your car's brake bias, or even change the size of the brake discs, F1 '97 lets you do it. It's a bit like all those yearly updates of sport games like FIFA. You know it's going to be good, but at the same time you know it's not much different from the last version. Whether or not you want it is ultimately up to you, but I'd rather wait for a racing game which offers something new and different.



All of the '97 teams are here, and each car has different attributes.

Alternatives

Other top racing titles include Porsche Challenge, V-Rally, Rapid Racer and, of course, the old Formula 1 game.



■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Generally quite nice, but there's still some break-up
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Better music and better engine sounds
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Just as good as before, though even smoother
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	How long can you keep racing?
■ ORIGINALITY:	★	It's the same as before, just slicker in every way

■ OVERALL: *Formula 1 '97* is an improvement over its predecessor, but it is basically the same game with a slicker presentation. Perfect if you don't have the old *Formula 1*.

8

OUT OF TEN

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

Take the old platform formula, add a new gameplay element, then soak in a solution of oddness overnight. *Don Pigleoddy* answers the chant...

PUBLISHER:	GT Interactive
DEVELOPER:	Oddworld Inhabitants
DISTRIBUTOR:	GTI
RELEASE:	Sept
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Platform
DIFFICULTY:	Hard
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Standard
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	M



Abe has many things to be wary of. Pulling levers may cause rocks to fall (left). Mines aren't good for Abe, so throw rocks at them to set them off (right).

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee is a new release from GT Interactive which received a very positive response when unveiled to the gaming world at this year's E3. This appears to be a unique and quite unusual game. At first Abe's Oddysee looks very platformy. And it is, but once you start playing it you discover that it requires a far greater level of intelligence than in other games of its ilk. It feels more like a platform-based strategy game than it does like most other platform games you've played.

Abe's Oddysee is the first in a series of games referred to by the developers as the A.L.I.V.E. genre. This acronym stands for Aware Life-forms In Virtual Entertainment. Rather than just being a bit of gaming jargon, they appear to be delivering on their promise. The main features include Game Speak (enabling players to speak to other characters in real time), and

QARMA, which is defined as "a program that monitors and responds to the ethics of a player's decisions throughout the game." i.e., in this game Karma is a consideration.

The story of Abe's Oddysee is quite bizarre, and is superbly introduced through its nicely produced FMV introductory sequence. Abe is a Mudokon (a weird sort of reptilian anthropomorph) slave labourer in the largest food-processing plant on Oddworld: the unusually named Rapture Farms. One day while working there, Abe inadvertently discovers the secret ingredient in the company's latest food product - his own species! After this, he escapes, meets a Shaman, goes on a quest etc, etc.

The thing which really distinguishes Abe's Oddysee from conceptually similar games is its whole approach to the tasks at hand. A fine

example of this is the way you eliminate your opponents. Rather than employing traditional methods such as jumping on their heads or blowing your enemies away with one of a variety of weapons, in Abe's Oddysee you actually have to use your brain to lure them to their destruction. This can be achieved by opening sections of floor for them to fall through or, for even more fun, by possessing the ugly buggers and having them tear each other apart. But don't get the wrong impression - you have to be just as quick with your fingers as you are with your brain. A lot of screens require you to make split-second jumps, or dash by while a couple of Sligs have their back turned, so there's always plenty of tension in this game.

Being able to possess other characters is just one of the cool tricks Abe has up his sleeve. Possession is accomplished by making Abe indulge in a



Alternatives

On the PlayStation there aren't many games like this, but some of you may remember a couple of similar 16-bit games called *Another World* and *Flashback*.



Use Abe's sneaking ability to get past stupid Sligs (left). Then again, sometimes it pays to just run for your life! (top right)



little bit of harmonic throat singing (very, very cool). When you consider this in conjunction with his wealth of more traditional platform skills and the Game Speak function, you'll see how even just walking Abe around can be great fun. The Game Speak function mainly lets you converse with your fellow Mudokons in short phrases (hello, follow me etc), but you can also make noises such as whistling and laughing. And in possibly the greatest innovation in video game history, this game contains a fart button. While this may sound a bit juvenile, it's damn good fun. In later stages, you have to use your vocal abilities to communicate with other Mudokons in order to convince them to let you pass.

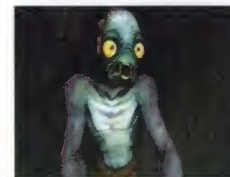
The most stunning feature of the game is the beautifully detailed graphics which bring Oddworld and its inhabitants alive. The movement of the creatures is just so smooth and realistic, with heaps

of cool incidental animation thrown in for effect. Each area has its own unique style in terms of looks and sounds, which combine to create an atmosphere that makes you feel like you're really there. Of particular note is the way the rendered cut scenes flow seamlessly into the actual game screens - very impressive - and there's never more than a short moment's pause for loading.

One of the nice features of this game is that Abe has infinite lives. Should you fall off a cliff, be squashed by a rock or get shot to pieces by a grumpy Slig, Abe's spirit turns into a flock of birds and revives him not more than a screen or two from where you got him killed. While infinite lives might make you think it's easy to get through the game, believe me it's not. You still have to work out the correct procedure for getting through each scenario and having infinite lives at your disposal only makes you more

determined to do it properly. You may well find yourself playing Abe's Oddysee for a lot longer than you intended to!

So what more is there to tell you? Not much. Abe's Oddysee looks and sounds great, offers a new slant on the platform genre and is darn addictive to boot. It's definitely the sort of game that will be fondly remembered in years to come, and we think that anyone who doesn't appreciate it is a little odd.



Revealing rendered sequence!



Use The Force, Abe! Your telepathic chanting powers allow you to communicate with others of your species or to possess those who would do you harm.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★★	Slick and detailed, but more importantly it looks good
■ SOUND:	★★★★★	Using voices to communicate adds a new dimension to the game
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Lots of head scratching, and nimble fingers are required
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	Not a game you'll finish too soon, nor will you want to
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Innovative use of speech, old style of game

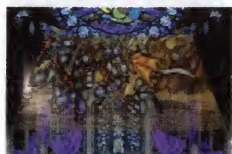
■ OVERALL: *Oddworld* offers a new twist on an old style of game and will keep persistent gamers up all night, just to get past one more stage. A rare treat indeed.

9
OUT OF TEN

Suikoden

Wandering aimlessly around the countryside, talking to fairies and summoning demons. Just another weekend for Don Pigeone.

PUBLISHER:	Konami
DEVELOPER:	Konami
DISTRIBUTOR:	Mainstream Interactive
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	RPG
DIFFICULTY:	Moderate
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
CONTROLLER:	Standard
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Being a Japanese RPG, it is mandatory for all characters to have green or blue hair.

When Final Fantasy VII is finally released in this country, there is absolutely no doubt that it will blitz the RPG field as it has all around the world, thus ending a long drought of top quality games for PlayStation RPG fanatics. To pass the time until that momentous day you might want to have a look at Suikoden, a new entry into the field from Konami. It may not have the most scope for plot mutations but, as linear as the plot is, it still has enough in there to keep you glued to your TV for a while at least.

In Suikoden, you play the part of a general's son in the service of the Scarlet Moon Empire, and to put it mildly, you've led a pretty sheltered life. One day, dear old dad goes away on business, leaving you to work for the Empire. Before you can say "Is that a halberd in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me?", you've become all messed up with the Liberation Army and have joined them in their struggle against what you've now realised is a corrupt and evil Empire, only to wind up as their leader. Hrrmmph! Talk about biting the hand that feeds you. Anyway...

As you follow this path, you go through the motions in traditional RPG fashion, walking around large areas of countryside, engaging in party combat (with one-on-one and army battles added for extra spice) and talking to lots and lots of people. Unfortunately, the action is almost completely linear, with a specific path to follow in both your objectives and conversations, but this is

compensated for by lots of intricate plot turns. In fact, once you get past this problem it can become very easy to accidentally spend many hours plugging away at it.

It's quite fortunate that Suikoden is engrossing and has a good plot because quite frankly, there are quite a few problems with the mechanics and production of the game. Graphically, Suikoden looks a lot like a number of 16-bit RPG games. With the exception of the party and one-on-one combat scenes, Suikoden is a very flat looking game. There's the occasional nice looking bit of fog and some of the spells do look quite

cool, but basically the graphics aren't very strong. Some of the characters have quite nice manga-style design, but again they lose out in overall execution.

The sound effects in Suikoden are quite decent, but unfortunately the same can't be said for the music. In a game like this where long term gameplay is intended, you really need good music, and if that is not possible you should at least be able to turn it off. It's true that sometimes the music can help to set the scene or give you a bit of a giggle with its high cheese factor, but on the whole I'd have to say I found it to be odoriferously odious.

The thing that really sucked in terms of gameplay was the complete lack of diagonal movement. This is an incredibly frustrating and inexcusable omission and really made me feel even more like I was playing a SNES game.

In spite of all these problems however, I've spent a preposterous amount of time playing Suikoden and have had a pretty decent time doing so. The lack of production ceases to be a problem once you've been sucked into the plot twists of the game, and while I've been chewing through it pretty quickly, it looks like it will take quite some time to complete. It's not Final Fantasy VII, in fact it's not in the same class at all, but Suikoden could be the answer for RPG fans who are having a hard time finding any to play until FFVII arrives later this year.



Take that! Die, you hideous outcast from Little Shop of Horrors, die!

Alternatives

You'd better start saving for Final Fantasy VII!

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	Nice, but fairly plain
■ SOUND:	★★	Hardly memorable, could have been so much better
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	Fine depth in plot and characterisation
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	Great while it lasts, but over too soon
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★	Very familiar RPG fare

■ OVERALL: *Suikoden* is basically a decent, if slightly flawed, entry in the RPG stakes, that's worth a go while you wait for Final Fantasy VII.

7
OUT OF TEN

Descent 2

So you think you're a Jedi at Doom, eh? Here's a game which will take you into the third dimension - literally. **Clyde E. Scope** is ready with the sick bag.



Descent 2 is the smoother, more detailed and altogether improved sequel to Descent from Interplay which will really test your sense of orientation in a real 360° 3D environment.

Forget your flat two-dimensional first-person shoot 'em ups, this is the real thing. You have been assigned to penetrate mines located on various asteroids, where once-loyal robot mine workers have turned nasty and gone on strike, holding the few human workers hostage. Armed only with your trusty laser and a tasty selection of missiles, you must rescue the hostages, find and destroy the main reactor of the mine and then escape before the whole thing blows up!

As mentioned, Descent 2 puts you in a totally 3D environment. You move your ship using a combination of joysticks for yaw in both planes (X and Y), and forward or reverse thrust. Using the analog dual joystick (or new analog pad), one stick was for the yaw, and the other for thrust and roll. A bit disorienting at first, but if you persist with the controls you will soon become a master at twisting and turning in tight, dark tunnels.

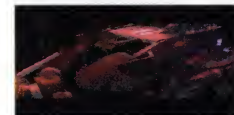
Your ship has limited shield and power supplies, but energy boosts and bonus shield spheres can be found hidden around the place, as well as a range of both gun and missile power-ups. All of the weapons can be fired with either of two buttons: one for the various missiles and the other for your main gun. Of course, the revolting robots have weaponry equally as devastating and, through years of oppression by their fleshy masters, have learnt how to use them. The artificial intelligence in Descent 2 is greatly improved over the original version. The robots watch your moves and quickly learn to evade your attacks. There are heaps of new robots which appear throughout the game, thanks to automatic generators which determine mine needs and assemble the required robots from surrounding minerals and metals! At the beginning of each new level, you are introduced to the robots you'll come up against; their functions, weaponry, and some cautionary tactical advice.

For all you Descent virgins out there, or for those of you who have difficulty coming to grips with

manoeuvring in three dimensions, some incentives have been added to this sequel, the most useful of which is the Guide Bot. It is trapped in a compartment somewhere in the mine and, once released, will either accept a range of instructions from you, or just lead you through the mission step by step. "Find a shield power-up" is one of the more useful commands you can issue it with, and you simply follow the Guide Bot to the target - it will come back for you if you get lost. There is still the dependable automap to help you work out where you need to go, and it is also fully rotatable and can be zoomed in and out.

There are other subtle features which make Descent 2 a truly great game. A link feature allows you to play with or against a friend or, robo-anarchy will pit you against robots and your friend. Descent 2 is not a game you will master in a short space of time, but if you think you are up to the challenge of navigating a labyrinthine 3D environment, the improved graphics, smooth gameplay and better features of this sequel should definitely earn it a test flight.

PUBLISHER:	Interplay
DEVELOPER:	Parallax
DISTRIBUTOR:	Roadshow
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	TBA
GAME TYPE:	3D shooter
DIFFICULTY:	Moderate
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Analog stick
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



The story is that you are a mercenary hired to rid an asteroid mine of disobedient droids and rampaging robots.

Alternatives

There's the old version of Descent, then Final Doom, and so forth.



Descent 2 is one of few games that puts you in a true 3D world. You can go up, down, in, out, backwards, forwards, sideways - all while shooting stuff!

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Good, considering it's not running on a high spec PC
■ SOUND:	★★★	The usual sci-fi effects
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	Very addictive once you learn the controls
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	Not easy, but it'll keep you coming back.
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	About the only 3D game that offers a real sense of freedom

■ OVERALL: *Descent 2* is a strategic blaster which offers an extra dimension for fans of Doom-style games. Highly recommended for players who like a challenge!

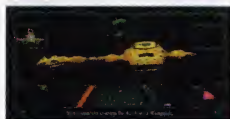
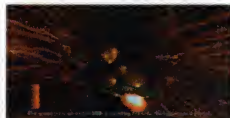
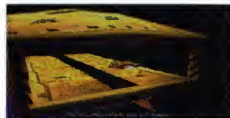
8

OUT OF TEN

Darklight Conflict

Captured, brainwashed and cybernetically enhanced, Steve Polak was ready to be unleashed upon an unsuspecting outside world. But was the world ready for him?

PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER:	EA
DISTRIBUTOR:	EA
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Space sim
DIFFICULTY:	Average
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	M



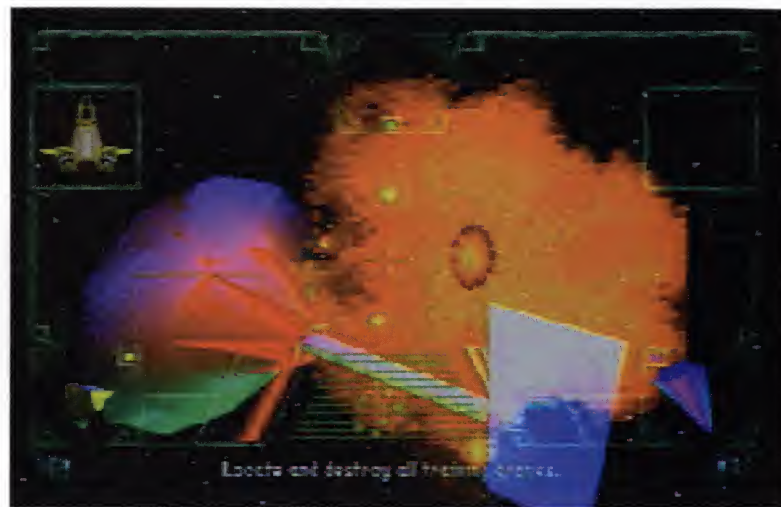
Mind your docking procedure, cosmonaut!

Well, it looks like PlayStation developers have decided that the space flight combat game is the genre of the moment. Over the next couple of months quite a few of these games are likely to reach our shores. This is a good thing, as the better ones are likely to be amongst the most enjoyable of PlayStation games.

Looking a bit like the poorer cousin of the PC classic Privateer 2, Darklight Conflict sees you embroiled in a fight to the death in an alien war you shouldn't even be involved in. The intergalactic exchange is between two alien races, the Ovons and the Reptons. The only reason you are taking part is that you have been captured, brainwashed and cybernetically enhanced by the Reptons who have been losing too many of their own pilots. Dinky plot or what?!

Anyway, the long and the short of it is that you are whizzing about in space at the controls of a souped-up space-fighter, and you must do your best to blast the gussets from the underwear of a host of similarly equipped Ovons opponents.

Darklight Conflict is a pretty tasty looking piece of software. The graphics are colourful, mighty smooth, and weapon fire is actively light sourced. Your craft is also highly manoeuvrable and armed to the teeth with 14 weapons of pain and suffering. The missions are also quite varied: you can undertake bombing runs over large enemy targets, play a defensive role during an enemy attack by manning gun turrets near your



base, or even use tractor beams during search and recover sorties. All of this means that Darklight Conflict offers quite a pleasant smorgasbord of delectable delights.

There is also plenty of depth to this one, as Darklight Conflict lets you totally lose yourself in over 50 missions. Admittedly, the first couple of these are nothing more than tedious training exercises, designed to teach you basic skills like gunnery navigation and space docking. However, I still managed to blow myself into trillions of little sub-atomic particles on my very first mission.

Why did this happen? Is it that I am totally crap? Or does Darklight Conflict have a gameplay problem? Sadly, the last

answer is the more truthful one. Even though combat is tense, involved, and has lots of opponents, weapon types, and strategies, returning home from the battle can often be the most dangerous thing you can do.

The problem is that Darklight Conflict forces you to go through the tedious and unnecessary farce of docking your ship at your base on your return. This contributes nothing at all to the gameplay. It is fiddly, repetitive and, worst of all, you can easily blow yourself to bits if you make a simple mistake - as the Mir cosmonauts know all too well. Then you are left with egg on your face as you have to start the mission all over again, even though you've just belted the crap out of the Ovons!

Other than this unenjoyable flaw, Darklight Conflict is pretty good fun to play. It may lack the personality/atmosphere of games like Wing Commander, or X Wing, but at least the 3D combat model is believable and the aliens use a variety of attack patterns which should keep you on your tactical toes.

Darklight Conflict isn't as instantly cathartic and enjoyable as a simple space-blaster, and it lacks the depth of a true galactic combat sim. Darklight Conflict owes a heavy debt to the PC classic Elite. But in the game's favour, Darklight Conflict does its Elite impression effortlessly, so space-flight addicts might want to consider this one. A good effort which is let down by one simple design flaw.



Question: How many cosmonauts can fit in an escape capsule and how long until the air runs out? Answers on the back of a postcard to the usual address.

Alternatives

Colony Wars, or any of the *Wing Commander* games if you dare.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	The weapons look great, and things whiz all over the place rather smoothly
■ SOUND:	★★★	OK, but nothing special
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Missions can be a little frustrating, and the docking procedure is a major drawback
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	The 50 missions should keep you busy for a while
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	There aren't many of this type of game on the PlayStation

■ **OVERALL:** A good space-flight sim, but *Darklight Conflict* falls just short of being a great one. You will have to be a fan of the genre to really get the most out of this one.

7

OUT OF TEN

Syndicate Wars

The mission: Proceed to mail box. Collect package containing review copy of Syndicate Wars. Eliminate postal worker. Eliminate mail box. Steve Polak was ready to go.

Visualise a futuristic world part Blade Runner, part Johnny Mnemonic, and you pretty much have the setting of Syndicate Wars. This brilliant, yet nihilistic offering sees you in charge of a troop of crack cyborg agents who have been created with only one purpose in mind. In Syndicate Wars, the name of the game is counter-insurgency. Kill those who dare to rise against you, or become dog meat, blown to pieces by some of the coolest weapons to ever grace the screen in a video game.

In a future where mega-corporations rule the masses with a brutal mix of violence and mind control, you can either play the role of a corporate bug squasher or a religious zealot on a mission to destroy the godless evil of the corporate behemoth. Needless to say, Syndicate Wars is not a game aimed at the younger player, as the violent nature of this game makes its presence felt pretty much from the first mission.

At the start of the game, your agents have to be sent to terminate a rampaging group of "unguided" citizens. These people deserve to die simply because they have a malfunction in their brainwashing program. Sounds sinister enough, but it gets even more so as the game gives you carte blanche to destroy pretty much anyone or anything which crosses your path. In Syndicate Wars, everything blows up.



In Syndicate Wars you control four cyborg agents of mass destruction. Use them wisely!

From the humble street lamp to entire building complexes. All can be destroyed if you have the right weapon and the nerve to carry it off. This makes for an extremely exciting and downright apocalyptic game, which will delight many, and possibly horrify some.

Syndicate Wars is a better looking game on the PlayStation than it is on the PC, but the fact that it was originally designed for the Wintel platform can make the game a little awkward to get used to at first. The navigation system (with its assignable way-points) was originally well-suited to a mouse, but is a little less satisfactory when using a joystick. There is a PlayStation mouse available, but unfortunately there aren't many players who own one.

Also, even though the graphics overall are smoother and better detailed when compared to the PC, the



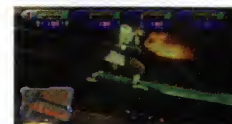
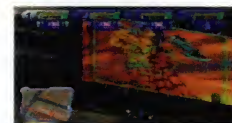
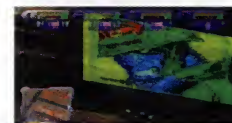
fact that the PC game originally assumed you'd be playing hunched over your SVGA monitor means that Syndicate Wars can look a little too fiddly and small (if you aren't sitting right on top of your TV). This can be compounded by the dark nature of many of the environments. Also you have to be adept at using the radar screen to pin-point enemies by rotating the game world to reveal obscured targets.

It is worth the effort to get used to the PC-ish control system, however, as Syndicate Wars is strategically challenging, chock-full of cathartic violence, and a demolition-mad gamer's delight. The game gives you a wide variety of destructive playthings to use. Some of the tastier toys include razor wire (which is as sinister as it sounds), and the ultimate apocalyptic high can be had when you get your first taste of the hand-held nuclear weapon!

The missions are as varied as they are difficult. One minute you will be frantically trying to escape an ambush set by enemy agents, the next escorting a VIP through an unsafe area downtown. Your opponents include a variety of enemy cyborgs, vehicles, and tanks. The ability to choose which side to play for adds to the replay value of the game, as the missions are different for each side, although there is still a lot of needless violence to be indulged in no matter who you play. The other nice feature which may extend the game's longevity is the four-player multi-tap option in which each player controls an individual agent.

Syndicate Wars is one of the few games which looks, plays, sounds, and lasts in a satisfying manner. A must for strategy fans who have a hunger for in-depth challenges and a murderous glint in their eyes.

PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER:	Bullfrog
DISTRIBUTOR:	Electronic Arts
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Action/Strategy
DIFFICULTY:	Hardish
PLAYERS:	One to four
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Mouse & Multitap
CLASSIFICATION:	M15



This movie screen shows 2000AD and Ghost in the Shell trailers!

Alternatives

Bedlam, Crusader No Remorse and Project Overkill are similar, but none are quite as good.



Join the Eurocorp Syndicate! Visit foreign countries and assassinate their members of state!

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	Smooth and nicely designed, but it can be hard to see what's going on
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Great screams of agonising pain, and a cool minimalist synth
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	Once you get the hang of it you'll be drawn in deeper and deeper
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	Good value here, two sides to play as and lots of missions
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Not without comparable titles, although few are as good

■ OVERALL: Brain cells will have to be engaged, but Syndicate Wars is one of the most enjoyable action/strategy games around. You can demolish everything for no real reason - gotta love that!

8

OUT OF TEN

Wing Commander IV

In space, no one can hear you scream. So that's where we sent Steve Polak to review Wing Commander IV. NOOOooooooooo!!!!!!!

PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER:	Origin
DISTRIBUTOR:	EA
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$99.95
GAME TYPE:	Space Opera
DIFFICULTY:	Moderate
PLAYERS:	One
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Analog Stick
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



The screen shots above show the tediously boring space combat parts of Wing Commander IV. It looks okay, but there really isn't much of a game to it.



No, it's not Luke, it's a fat actor in a B-grade game.

Mr Hamill is back, ready to blast the bejesus out of anyone who claims Wing Commander III isn't quite the career achievement Star Wars was. Wing Commander IV is one of the biggest budget interactive movie extravaganzas ever, and as such it is a pretty difficult hybrid beast to judge. This is because the game doesn't seem to know which direction it is heading in. As a movie, WC4 is at times abysmally scripted and extremely unconvincing, but things aren't real good when you look at the game either.

WC4 is set immediately after WC3 (funnily enough), and having beaten the Kilrathi scum once again, it would seem that peace is assured. Wrong! This time round civil war is the order of the day, and your enemies are not so obviously feline and furry. This development in the plot actually helps the interactive movie side of things (as you have to sort out who are your friends and foes), but the story in WC4 hangs together with all of the resilience of a rather soggy paper bag.

Looking at the full motion video, it is hard to believe that at least five million dollars was spent putting this

game together. It looks very much like a B-grade Star Trek clone, and judging from his girth, it would seem that Mark Hamill consumed much of the budget in his catering fee.

I do wonder how much of the development budget was actually spent on gameplay. Admittedly, the flight model is better than in WC3, and it does run more smoothly and has more detailed graphics than its PC-based parent. Also, it is pleasing to note that the missions are now much more varied, but this doesn't change the fundamental flaws of the game's original design.

When WC4 was released for the PC I was initially blown away by the in game visuals, but quickly found the 3D space combat model to be lacking in sophistication. Sadly, all of the foibles of the PC version have carried across to the PlayStation.

Simply put, the '3D-ness' of space-flight combat isn't conveyed at all convincingly. Enemies often make fairly simple attack runs, and they are usually to be found tracking you from directly behind, or coming in like kamikazes from hell as they speed towards you head on.

Also, at times the missions seem to

be arranged in a rather haphazard manner, especially the sortie in which you visit a planet to take photos. Origin should really have a look at the way companies like Lucas Arts have managed to build variety into a game's design, whilst also keeping the plot cohesive, and the different bits enjoyable.

WC4 is much more of an arcade experience than a believable in-depth 3D sim and, as such, might prove quite enjoyable to many. The action is immediate, and all you need do is whirl about the place like a crazed dervish at a Sunday banquet and you will, most likely, prevail.

On the interactive movie side of the equation, WC4 is a also lot more involved and enjoyable than its predecessor (if this can be listed as an achievement). But for my money, I'd trade 'interactivity' for point and click, multiple choice bits tacked onto the flight sim any day.

Still, I think the most telling fact when you look at this game is that Origin aren't planning to roll Mr Hamill and the rest of the cast out in a hurry for a while for the next episode in the proceeding. Sometimes mothballs aren't such a bad idea...

Alternatives

Sanity is your only salvation! Repent! Repent! Or play *Darklight Conflict* or *Colony Wars*.



■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	Good quality video, shocking in-game graphics
■ SOUND:	★★★	Good movie-style soundtrack, but the rest is average
■ GAMEPLAY:	★	If watching crap then playing crap appeals to you, go for it!
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	There are four CDs worth of 'entertainment', if you care for it
■ ORIGINALITY:	★	Boring

■ OVERALL: Imagine watching a badly acted and poorly scripted sci-fi tele-drama that you can't escape from, and being forced to play the worst game in the ad breaks. That's *Wing Commander IV*.

4
OUT OF TEN

Lost Vikings 2: Norse By Norsewest

Three Vikings are lost in time and space. Perhaps the *Black Pig* can show them the way to enlightenment?

The original *Lost Vikings* game was a big hit when it was released on the SNES, due mainly to its unusual approach to the platform genre. In the game, three Vikings, Erik the Swift, Baleog the Fierce and Olaf the Stout, were imprisoned aboard the spaceship of an evil genius with the improbable name of Tomator. The game revolved around utilising the different yet complementary powers of the three vikings to overcome various problems, and was more of a puzzle-driven game than an action based one.

For the 32-bit version of *Lost Vikings*, Interplay has stuck pretty closely to the original concept for the sequel. This time though, the three are lost in both time and space and once more must co-operate in order to return to their beloved Scandinavian homeland. The Vikings each have different abilities which must be employed to solve the puzzles in the game. Some of these abilities result from use of equipment stolen from Tomator before their capture and thus there has been some expansion on the original in this department.

Once you start actually playing *Lost Vikings 2*, it quickly becomes apparent that this is no ordinary platform game. There is an unmistakeable appeal in having to use your brain in a platformer rather than just jumping, running, collecting coins and so on. Unfortunately, having the three Vikings is like having one normal platform character split into three. You'll become frustrated by facts such as only one can attack, only one can swim, and so on. As a result, logical thinking plays a larger role here than you would normally expect from a platform game, though there are still many familiar platform cliches throughout.

On the production side of things, *Lost Vikings 2* is a bit of a mixed bag, and in no area is this more apparent than in the graphics. The intro sequence contains some of the best looking graphics I've seen in a while, with a really tasty claymation feel about them. But this ends up looking like a bit of a tease when you view the actual game graphics. Sure, they're perfectly functional and quite clear, but they're by no means spectacular. Some of the animation is very slow, and overall doesn't contain anything you



"Oh mighty Goddess of game continues, please give us another go! Pleeceeees!"

wouldn't expect to see in a good 16-bit game. Fortunately, the nature of the game means this isn't a huge drawback.

The music throughout *Lost Vikings 2* is nicely produced and unusually hip for a platform game. The sound effects are similarly well executed and while some of them could have been a bit beefier, there's really nothing to complain about here. The on-screen help announcer's voice can become annoying quite quickly, but as with all the sound in this game, you can turn off what you don't like.

Lost Vikings 2 also has a two-player mode where you share the responsibilities of controlling Olaf, Erik and Baleog, and this is quite entertaining. Depending on the level of co-operation between both the characters and their human controllers, this could lead to either massive violence or great fun.

Lost Vikings 2 is an interesting addition to currently available platformers and is worth a look if you're looking for a platform game that's a little bit different from the rest.



PUBLISHER:	Interplay
DEVELOPER:	Silicon & Synapse
DISTRIBUTOR:	Roadshow
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Platform
DIFFICULTY:	Medium
PLAYERS:	One or two
LINK UP:	No
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Cool claymation intro!

Alternatives

There are plenty of other platform games out there, but few which require as much brain power as this one. *Abe's Oddysee* is your best bet.

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	Functional, but not spectacular
■ SOUND:	★★★★	Actually very good most of the time
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	Unusual. A lot will depend on your attitude
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	Fairly challenging and quite long
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★	Apart from the prequel, there's not much like it

■ OVERALL: It's a platform game, but not the sort you might be expecting. *Lost Vikings 2* will require you to use your brain if you hope to succeed.

7

OUT OF TEN

Test Drive Off-Road

PUBLISHER:	Accolade
RELEASE:	Out Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Driving
PLAYERS:	1 or 2
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



"What? Not another off-road racing game!" I thought to myself as I tore the plastic wrapping off the box. Test Drive Off-Road looked for all the world like yet another B-grade 'extreme' racing game. So, is there anything that makes it stand out from the others? I wasn't sure until I looked at the options menu, where I discovered a few interesting things that made the game a whole lot more enjoyable to play. Once the anti-skid option was turned off the game became a raging power slide-fest! There is also power steering, friction and damage options which, when used in various combinations, greatly changes the feel of the game. Adjusting these lets you tailor the feel of the game to your liking, thus adding enough interest to hold your attention for a while longer.

The structure of the game is quite standard. Firstly, there are two leagues to play in: Class League, in which everyone has the same type of vehicle; and Mixed League, where you compete against other types of vehicles. Here you are involved in a tournament to win one of several cups, and each time you win one a couple of new tracks will be made available. In order to unlock all of the tracks, however, you must win the cups on different difficulty settings.

The racing itself is pretty standard, too. There are checkpoints along the tracks which you have to cross in order to gain enough time to get to the next checkpoint, and there is a panic button which puts you back at the last checkpoint you passed if you wander too far off the track. This is easy enough to do, as the track is not always clearly defined. In fact, your opposition have a habit of taking short cuts and, as long as you pass all the checkpoints in sequence, you can go anywhere in the playing area. There are no spectacular crashes, however, and the worst you can do is to roll your truck onto its roof then wait for a few seconds as it automatically reappears upright.

Although there are only four trucks to choose from, each has a range of colour schemes and its own handling characteristics. There are several bonus vehicles available if you drive well enough, and once you get the bonus vehicle you can select it from the starting screen, except that they can only be used during practice races.

The best racing option is, of course, the two-player mode. This sees just you and a friend racing head to head and is loads of fun, especially when you forget about racing and just try to run each other off the road!

- Clyde E. Scope



GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

OVERALL: Not a bad game, but *Test Drive Off-Road* doesn't really offer anything you probably haven't seen in most other driving games. Worth a look, though.

6

OUT OF TEN

Tokyo Highway Battle

PUBLISHER:	Jaleco/T*HQ
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G8



Tokyo Highway Battle came out of nowhere, arriving at the office in a plain brown paper bag with no pre-press hype, launch parties or fluffy dice. And coming from a developer not known for its quality products (Home Alone and Wayne's World for the SNES), we were understandably a bit sceptical. Well polish my blower and clean out my tail pipe if we weren't wrong - Tokyo Highway Battle ain't so bad after all! Why? Mainly because the physics of this game, in fact the whole theme of it, revolves around power sliding or, as it's known in this game, 'drifting'.

THB follows the usual format of single races: practice or a whole season. You start with three cars, no cash and a (possibly) heroic driving career ahead of you. There are three tracks too, each with a driver that must be defeated to progress. On top of that there are 64 (yep, 64!) enhancements, strap-ons and doobie-whatsits to add to your car to increase its performance.

Once you've defeated the first three drivers, another three appear in faster cars and with better skills. You'll also have another three cars to choose from, and all up there are twelve cars in the game, three new ones every time you win against the three drivers in that round. When you have crushed all of them beneath your Dunlops, it's time to take on Keiichi himself, and by that stage you'd better have the fastest car with all the mods or you won't stand a chance.

The best thing about THB is the nice way the cars handle. It's easy to slide around the corners and, even though the acceleration doesn't feel quite right, once you get the hang of it, it's great fun. On the negative side, however, there are only three tracks (two of which are very similar), and it can be difficult to get past the second round of opponents as, for some reason, their cars just go much faster than yours! Nevertheless, Tokyo Highway Battle is fun for a weekend or two and although it can't compare with the likes of V-Rally or Porsche on the visual side of things, there are bound to be quite a few players who would rather play this than Rage Racer any day!

- Nad Soropos

GRAPHICS:	★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

OVERALL: *Tokyo Highway Battle* looks like a dodgy old Japanese driving game, but beneath the woeful presentation lies a surprisingly enjoyable racer.

6

OUT OF TEN

Independence Day

PUBLISHER:	Fox Interactive
RELEASE:	Out Now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Shooter
PLAYERS:	One or Two
MEMORY CARD:	Why bother?
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



You know that cliché about the quality of videogames based on popular movie licenses? Well it seems that Fox Interactive does, and sadly they aren't about to let it die. So yes, ID4 is based on the popular sci-fi flick of the same name. And yes, it probably cost a fortune to pay for the movie license. Sadly, this means that the game is a load of useless old crap, presumably because there was no cash left after the license acquisition to pay for game development.

Imagine playing a dog-fighting simulation in the cramped confines of a pinball machine's play area. You have very little altitude at your disposal, a force field limits your movement over the landscape, and to top it all off, a lot of the time the ground is littered with obstacles like buildings or canyons for you to run into as well. They might have done just as well to set this flight sim in my lavvy for all the good it does. Admittedly, your aircraft does move quite nimbly about the place, but the alien City Destroyers lurk so close overhead that it is high impossible to even do a humble loop. Hrrmph!

Okay, so perhaps it is worth pointing out that Independence Day does have a few potentially interesting features, which might have made the game enjoyable were it not for the fact that the main design concept is flawed. Positive thing no. 1: You can play the game head-to-head in a two-player split-screen mode, a feature that is still found all too infrequently in most PlayStation games. Positive point no. 2: There is lots of scene-setting FMV shorts from the movie which helps get you into the mood (although you could just rent the video for less than a tenth of the cost of the game).

But I can't do it! Nothing is going to save this game from the total schalacking it deserves, because it is also a piece of piss to breeze through. Once you learn how to strategically gather ammo, watch your tail and only go for the key missions objectives (thus avoiding all of the unnecessary encounters), you will find yourself getting through this one quicker than you can say, "Hey, what happened to my money?!"

But hey, this is only one rather disappointed gamer's opinion, and if you have purchased the game and still feel satisfied then I don't mind subscribing to the adage that one man's meat is another's poison. However, if you are contemplating shelling out those shekels, 'try before you buy' is definitely a good motto. ID4 the game is only likely to be enjoyed by hardcore fans of the film or novice gamers, and sadly it perpetuates the evil conspiracy that games based on popular (and often cool) movies are much more likely to be a bit on the nose than most other games.

- Steve Polak

■ GRAPHICS:	★	■ OVERALL: Life would be a whole lot better if games like this didn't exist. Still, you need the bad if you are going to appreciate good.
■ SOUND:	★	
■ GAMEPLAY:	★	
■ LIFESPAN:	★★	
■ ORIGINALITY:	★	

2
OUT OF TEN

Rally Cross

PUBLISHER:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$69.95
GAME TYPE:	Driving
PLAYERS:	1 - 4
MEMORY CARD:	Recommended
CONTROLLER:	Analog & Multitap
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Rally Cross is an off-road racing game which has more bumps and hills in it than just about any other racer out there. In fact, Rally Cross is not so much a rally simulation as it is an off-road game. There are three basic tracks available at the start, with more being revealed as you progress. Each track offers three different variations, with new and alternate routes opening up as you progress through the game. There is the option to race each track forwards or backwards, as well as the choice of conventional racing or going head-on towards your opponents. In this suicide mode it is you racing in one direction with all the other cars driving in the opposite direction. This makes for some spectacular looking crashes and head-on collisions, as the computer controlled cars always seem to make a beeline for your car! Unfortunately, it also makes it incredibly difficult to finish in first place, so it is definitely more of a gimmick than a major feature of the game.

One of the things which sets Rally Cross apart from other racing games is that the tracks are actual terrain instead of roads. Due to the amount of bumps, dips and imperfections on the road surface, your car lurches all over the place, even when you're trying to drive in a straight line.

For sheer driving pleasure, not to mention stability, Namco's analog Negcon controller is a must to use with the game. Rally Cross requires precision steering if you wish to stay on track, and with the standard PlayStation controller there isn't enough accuracy or finesse to allow for consistent lap times.

The game's most obvious failing is its looks. Objects become quite blocky and pixelated as they get close to the screen, giving the game a 'rough' appearance. In this respect, Rally Cross comes across a looking like what a state-of-the-art arcade game did five or six years ago. In Rally Cross' favour, is the ability to play with up to four players in a split-screen race using the multi-tap, although the two-player split screen race is much clearer and is surprisingly fast, losing little of the detail from the single-player viewpoint.

- Nick Smith



■ GRAPHICS:	★★★	■ OVERALL: Rally Cross is a rough 'n' tough racing game that may not look very good at first, but does get better once you get the fast cars.
■ SOUND:	★★★	
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★	
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★★	
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★★★	

8
OUT OF TEN

Spider

PUBLISHER:	BMG
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$78.83
GAME TYPE:	Platform
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Password
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Producers of platform games have a pretty tough time these days. Either they make a 2D platform game and risk being ridiculed for being stuck in the dark ages, or make a 3D platformer only to have some geek say "but it's not as good as Tomb Raider". With Spider, however, Boss has come up with a game that doesn't really fit into any pre-existing category of platform games, and while it may not be the best game of this sort, it's still worth a look.

You play the part of a scientist whose brain has been transferred into the body of a cybernetically enhanced spider. Just how this happens is explained in the truly awe-inspiring rendered intro, which is so smooth that the people in it actually move like people.

Spider is quite an unusual game in that while the game features stunning 3D environments, you can only move along predetermined paths. In this respect, Spider is very much like Pandemonium. Some people may have trouble dealing with this in the face of games which offer 3D movement, but if you can get used to it, there are definite advantages. By simplifying the movement, the game moves at a blistering pace and the graphics can be quite detailed. All the characters are polygon-based and are animated very smoothly. The spiders even move in a fashion realistic enough to make the arachnophobes among you start sweating.

In terms of actual gameplay, Spider follows traditional platform game rules: collect things in hundreds; jump on moving things; etc. Again, however, the graphics come to the rescue by providing unusual settings for you to crawl all over. In the end, it's got a sort of Micro Machines feel, especially in bonus stages such as the 70s room which comes complete with giant lava lamps!

Along the way you get to collect lots of devastating weapons which are fused onto various parts of the spider's body. While it's sometimes a little difficult to control, these weapons and the ability to hang off web strands make this game quite entertaining to play.

Spider is a fairly long and challenging game, and if you can get past the lack of freedom of movement, you'll find it to be an entertaining and atmospheric game with a good level of production. It won't be for everyone, but it's worth a look for platform junkies.

- Don Pigleone

GRAPHICS:	★★★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★
ORIGINALITY:	★★

OVERALL: Nothing special, but Spider offers a slightly different slant on the platform genre.

6

OUT OF TEN

PO'ed

PUBLISHER:	Warner Interactive
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	3D Shooter
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	M



The plot of this game is that you are the cook aboard an interstellar spaceship. Just as you are getting to the most intricate phase in a soufflé baking operation, your vessel is commandeered by aliens. All of your crewmates have been slaughtered and, to top things off, your culinary creation has been rendered a flop! These traumatic events get you Pissed Off, hence the game's title, so it's time to pick up that meat cleaver and stomp off in a rage with a view to splicing and dicing the miserable sods responsible.

On the 3DO, PO'ed was a breath of fresh air as there were few games in the 3D action genre which worked as effectively. PO'ed played well and was colourful, and had a sense of humour to boot - many of the aliens were an odd bunch of misfits who seem to have been spawned in the shallow end of the gene pool.

However, now that PO'ed is available on the leading home video game system, it is much harder for a game of this vintage to compete with the many newer titles out there which have been specifically designed for the PlayStation. For a start, the graphics are not nearly up to the standard of recent games like Life Force Tenka or Disruptor. In other words PO'ed still looks very much like the original game, which was designed with the specifications of the less powerful 3DO in mind. This wouldn't necessarily be a problem if the gameplay was up to scratch, but at times PO'ed was to be the best way to describe my own feelings while playing this game.

The problem is that some of the levels feature moving platforms and elevators which either toss you about the place uncontrollably, or do their best to squish you into the ceiling. This can be downright annoying. Also even though they are colourful (and there is a passably interesting jetpack level), most of the stages seem sprawling and confused, with none of the 'killing area frenzy' finesse of Doom or Duke Nukem.

On the positive side, some of the weapons are fun to fiddle with (especially the devastating drill, which leaves a bloody stain on your visor), and PO'ed is quite different from many games in the genre. However, it is doubtful whether the novelty feel of this game makes it a viable proposition in light of games such as Tenka and most of the dedicated first-person perspective shooters.

- Steve Polak



GRAPHICS:	★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★
ORIGINALITY:	★★

OVERALL: A few years ago PO'ed was considered not a bad effort, but the times are a changing and it can't compete with the slicker new titles.

5

OUT OF TEN

Speedster

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Driving
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Hmm, another racing game for the PlayStation... This is something we really need? Perhaps this sarcasm isn't entirely warranted, as there is always room for another good game, but sadly Speedster doesn't fit into this category.

As far as racing games go, Speedster is slow, and severely lacking in detail, decent sound effects, realistic handling, or any semblance of gameplay challenge. The idea is fair enough, a top-down racing game along a variety of highways (with two-player simultaneous action), but sadly this game is an example of a good idea which has been butchered by poor execution.

Psygnosis should have cut its losses and put this one out to pasture rather than foisting it on you chaps out there. Perhaps all is not lost, as Speedster might appeal to those of you who like a sure thing, and don't want things zooming about the screen too quickly (nice to savour the moment eh?). In all seriousness, though, Speedster is probably quite a useful game if you are shopping for your four-year old brother, sister, cousin etc.

The race commentary does its best to give you the impression that you are whizzing along the freeway pushing your racing skills to the limit, but the truth is this game is about as much fun as vacuuming your armpits (sounds similar too). At one point the commentator guy got totally out of control screaming "Whoah!" most enthusiastically. Apparently we had gone over a jump, but from the top down perspective it was impossible to see any visible evidence of this astounding manoeuvre, and more to the point, it had absolutely no effect on my car's speed, handling or direction.

The matchbox sized cars also look almost identical (give or take a few different colours), and you can easily win a race by taking the inside line on corners. If you do this, the other cars are so stupid you can usually muscle underneath them and cut the corner right under their noses. You aren't even penalised if you go off into the grass or have a decent knock with the barrier.

If you have ever seen the brilliant Micro Machines V3 from the Codemasters you know that the 'top down' racer can be a lot of fun if well executed. Pity this isn't the case here.

- Steve Polak



GRAPHICS:	★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★
LIFESPAN:	★
ORIGINALITY:	★★

OVERALL: As long as sub-standard games like Speedster continue to be released, it is our duty to warn you about them! Run away! Run away!

4

OUT OF TEN

Trash It

PUBLISHER:	Warner
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Platform
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G8+



One thing we seem to do regularly at PlayStation Magazine is bemoan the fact that far too many games we see are derivative re-workings of tried and tested designs. Many of these clones and sequels are a lot of fun, but it is nice to see something that comes along and tries to do something different.

Trash It is a weird platform game where you have to destroy bits and pieces of the scenery in an effort to pass through a level. To do this you take charge of a rather portly bloke called Timmy. Timmy has a giant hammer, a vacuum cleaner, and the ability to squish up real tight and fit inside his hard hat. This makes Timmy a pretty odd bod, but he's handy at smashing just about anything he can raise his mallet to.

Each level usually sees Timmy confronted by a giant pile of concrete blocks or other similar obstacles which he has to destroy intelligently in order to get past. I say intelligently, because you have to whack structures till they collapse in a way which ensures you aren't underneath when it crashes to the ground.

There is lots of detail in the graphics, with a bit of parallax scrolling and heaps of colourful quirky bits. Wandering about the place with your mallet 're-configuring the landscape' does sound like fun, and Trash It isn't as agonising to play as some of the other games I have seen this month.

However, for all of its good intentions, Trash It is a little awkward to control. Your Timmy character has a few annoying moves which haven't been thought through. In particular, his abilities to jump, run and slide aren't very precise and this means you sometimes have the frightening feeling that you are out of control as you run, skip and skid about the place. Timmy can also sometimes lose his hammer (when he loses a life from falling debris) in a way which makes it impossible for him to retrieve it. This is annoying.

The game also has an odd 'whack a mole' style bonus game in which you have to belt gopher-like critters on the noggin as they pop their heads up for a look, but sadly this sub game is poorly drawn, awkward to control, and pretty much a waste of time.

The game also has a two player co-operative mode and a battle mode, which look like they might be interesting (and might make the game a lot more engaging). Worth a look, but definitely a 'try before you buy' proposition.

- Steve Polak

GRAPHICS:	★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★
ORIGINALITY:	★★★

OVERALL: Standard platform game fare, but with enough of its own style to make it worth a look if you're after something slightly different.

6

OUT OF TEN

Destruction Derby

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$49.95
GAME TYPE:	Racing
PLAYERS:	1 or 2 link-up
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Destruction Derby was one of the very first games to be released on the PlayStation, and quickly became one of the higher selling titles. Even now, a couple of years later, you can see why this was the case. The appeal is obvious to anyone who's ever thought there should be more to driving games than setting good lap times, then beating them. And really, who can deny the satisfaction one derives from driving full-speed into another car?

Destruction Derby has three modes of racing: stock car racing (traditional fastest-around-the-track racing), wreckin' racing (zooming around a track accumulating points by smashing other cars) and destruction derby (full-on auto destruction in a closed bowl). The main appeal here lies with the latter as the first can't really match the competition in terms of straight racing. But, both wreckin' racing and destruction derby are fast-paced biff-o-ramas that will keep you coming back for quite a while.

Due to its age though, Destruction Derby does have a few minor problems. The first and most major problem concerns the tracks. They are just too limited in their scope and variety. There are only six racing tracks and just the one demolition bowl. In addition, the racing tracks are too similar and it's unfortunate that there is only one bowl, as this is the best part of the game. The control of the cars is rather sloppy, but hey, this isn't Porsche Challenge and if the game is fun to play, what does it really matter?

One thing that did annoy me though, was the music. Dodgy techno. While you may laugh at it at first, the music soon becomes very annoying and you can't turn it down. Additionally, each course always has the same track, so there really is no escape.

Overall, however, while the release of Destruction Derby 2 saw many improvements to the game mechanics and track design, the original still stands as a fairly solid, if slightly dated, title. Destruction Derby also has a two player (link up) mode, something not found in the sequel, and the fact that so many people already own Destruction Derby makes it worthwhile finding someone who does and playing a link-up game - this is without doubt the most attractive feature now that the game is more affordable.

So, if you're looking for a good bit of fast-paced destruction and/or general mayhem and you aren't overly concerned with performance mechanics, Destruction Derby seems like a decent choice.

- Don Pigleone

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★
■ SOUND:	★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★
■ VALUE:	★★★

■ OVERALL: A rough game, both in terms of style and content, but for \$50 Destruction Derby is worth considering as a two-player link-up game.

6
OUT OF TEN

Ridge Racer

PUBLISHER:	Namco
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$49.95
GAME TYPE:	Driving
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Negcon
CLASSIFICATION:	G



When it was originally released as part of the initial line up of PlayStation titles, Ridge Racer quickly became a huge success. Even though it has since spawned two sequels, the original still manages to hold its own in a tough market driven by the latest graphics.

When it comes to playing the game, you should be thoroughly familiar with the drill: drive fast, make good lap times and then maybe graduate to the bonus tracks or even get a chance to play them backwards. Jumping straight into the driver's seat is the go. No messy options to choose from, just pick the car you want to drive, the transmission - either manual or automatic, the track you want to race on and it's 3... 2... 1... Go! Initially, there are four cars to choose from, each with different handling, speed etc, and if you are persistent enough, a further nine secret cars come up for grabs.

There are three courses available from the options. Each is an extension of the first track, with new turns to challenge you and scenery to drive by. The courses are labelled according to their difficulty - either beginner, medium or expert - and time trial. This may be the only gripe I have about this game - the lack of tracks. Although they can be considered separate, they are really just an extension of the first track, but once you master the game you'll only want to play the ultra-fast Time Trial race, anyway.

Despite its age, this game is still one of the best racing games around. From the moment you slam your thumb onto the accelerator, the smoothness and speed of gameplay is second to none. The cars all handle well and the game plays well with the standard controller or an analog controller, whichever your preference.

A neat feature of Ridge Racer is that the entire game loads into the PlayStation's memory, therefore allowing you to take out the game disk and put in your favourite music CD to listen to as you race. A trivial feature, granted, but a Godsend if you can't stand the hideous techno built in.

One of the flaws that Ridge Racer does suffer from is that you can't play a two player game in this version. Although that was one of the attractions of the arcade games, it doesn't really detract from the fun of this home version.

If you have only recently acquired a PlayStation and are a bit overwhelmed by the vast number of racing sims available, ease yourself into the action with Ridge Racer, the first and in many regards one of the best on PlayStation.

- Nick Smith



■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★
■ SOUND:	★★★
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★
■ VALUE:	★★★★

■ OVERALL: It may not look as pretty as some of the newer driving games out there, but Ridge Racer is truly a classic that's as fun to play now as it ever was.

8
OUT OF TEN

Tekken

PUBLISHER:	Namco
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$49.95
GAME TYPE:	Beat 'em up
PLAYERS:	1 or 2
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



Namco's first three-dimensional one-on-one fighting game has just been re-released as part of Sony's Platinum range, making it an absolute bargain for those who like brutal violence. With a sensible eight characters to choose from and five difficulty levels (easy, medium, hard, very hard and ultra hard), there is a great deal in this golden oldie to keep y'all amused for a good while, assuming that is that you aren't already too heavily into its sequels. There are some great features in this game that its followers lack, such as the choice of three viewpoints. Simple ideas like these get lost in the bustle of bigger and better productions. Sigh.

The characters involved in Tekken are remarkably seamless in comparison to say, Tekken 2, if a little rigid in their stances. Their movements too are often astonishing in their fluidity, thanks to the stupendous frame rate of 50 per second. They all have plenty of moves, governed by the simplicity of four buttons, each in charge of a certain limb. Each character also has one individual 10-hit combination string.

This was the first game to use the high/mid/low attack system, so that crouching opponents could not escape harm. Many beat 'em ups have followed in these footsteps, realising the depth in strategic gameplay it leads to. Low attacks hurt the standing foe, middle attacks hurt those crouching. High and middle attacks are blockable when standing, but one must duck to avoid a low one. Dudes ducking completely avoid high blows and throws, gaining a tactical advantage when this happens, as it is impossible to block while swinging a punch. Everyone has at least three moves which are unblockable.

The background scenery in the game varies between sprawling plains, wintry tundra, football fields and the like, all with sharp 2D horizons. Combatants can spar as far as they like without ever getting anywhere or falling off the edge of the world, but what I liked most about the settings is that the actual location is always noted at the bottom right of the screen, making this perhaps the most educational fighting game in existence.

The full motion video introduction is good, but the endings are much more amusing. The heart and soul though, and the real reason everyone, including you, should run screaming to the shops to buy this, is the mini-game of Galaga which replaces the initial loading time. I have a strong suspicion that some cheat would be unlocked if all 40 enemy spacecraft were destroyed. So far I've bagged 38...

- Hillous

GRAPHICS:	★★★★
SOUND:	★★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★★
VALUE:	★★★★★

OVERALL: The simple, no-nonsense approach offered by Tekken is a refreshing blast and its new low price makes it an affordable piece of gaming history not to be missed.

9
OUT OF TEN

WipeOut

PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$49.95
GAME TYPE:	A-G Racing
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Finally, the future's greatest racing title has been released in the Platinum range, making it a great bargain for anyone with their head screwed on - the right way or otherwise. Created by the accomplished developing team Psygnosis, WipeOut flaunts some of the fastest, smoothest graphical splendour ever to grace a PlayStation, being surpassed to this day only by its own sequel. If you don't already have either WipeOut in your humble home, it sure is humble! Get this now! Here's why.

WipeOut was the first anti-gravity racing game for any console. The vehicles never touch the ground. This brilliant idea of having frictionless craft automatically disposed of the thousand and one tricky equations required to simulate the various physical forces between the vehicle and the ground (acceleration, deceleration, load transfer, steering etc), thus making the game a cross between a racer and a flight sim.

Understandably, this allows some ludicrous speeds to become very possibly achieved. You race along a flat channel, and all you really have to worry about is not hitting the walls.

Littered throughout each race are two good things: blue arrows and pick-ups. The blue arrows, when passed over, increase your velocity a little. The pick-ups give you something different depending on their colour at the moment you pass over them. Some things are personally helpful, but the majority are most effective at kicking the snot out of enemy craft. That's right, weaponry. This slick sim has more ammo than you could poke your craft at, and it isn't just you who gets to use it either. Believe you me, every single computer competitor in the race is your personal enemy. When they attain arms, as signified by a grimly impartial voice-over naming that weapon, you can bet it will be your bum copping the flak.

There are an initial six circuits to choose from, up to seven kilometres in length, all of them unique. Unfortunately, you probably won't be looking around at the scenery in the heat of a race, but it's there to be seen (and worth seeing) nonetheless. Painstakingly rendered with ducts and structures, mountains and monoliths, trees and towers, sleet and snow, each track bears a distinctive character.

At first, only one speed is available, but even then, it's not easy. I'll tell you a secret - I was so good at WipeOut 2097 that I won a T-shirt, but I can't even beat the easiest class in WipeOut! This is a long-life game.

- Hillous



GRAPHICS:	★★★★★
SOUND:	★★★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★★★
VALUE:	★★★★★

OVERALL: WipeOut is second greatest racing game of the future and now that it's been re-released there's no excuse to miss it. In short, it's 50 bucks, so buy it.

9
OUT OF TEN

Actua Soccer

PUBLISHER:	Gremlin
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$49.95
GAME TYPE:	Soccer
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



With its release as a Platinum title, our good editor has requested that we go back into the mists of time and have another good, long, hard look at Actua Soccer. The thrust of this request is, it seems to me, this: if we thought the game was relatively crap last time around, does the passing of a year or so and a hefty price reduction make it any less crap? My immediate inclination is to answer "Probably not". I don't want a crap game in my house at any price - why not put the money towards two-fifths of a good game - because life is far too short for anything crap, really.

Ultimately though, Actua is not totally crap - it's just not as good as the opposition. In our initial review of soccer game contenders Actua Soccer ran a "convincingly disappointing third" behind FIFA and Adidas Power Soccer. I guess that the emergence of International Superstar Soccer and logic means that it now runs a convincingly disappointing fourth. Ouch. So what did we like first time around? We thought, the commentary, while repetitive, was plentiful and frequently funny and the stadium in which the games are played was awesome. Of course, if you buy games for just the commentary and the stadium you're a complete nong with so much loose change that you don't give a flying fruitbat for Platinum titles anyway.

Actua was, and is, very arcadey. The sprites look pretty good but the game has an unreal feel, in stark contrast to FIFA's vigorous accuracy. The fact that FIFA subsequently got so vigorously accurate that it sent everyone to sleep is irrelevant. The ball in Actua Soccer bounces ridiculously high and the constantly moving camera angles, while technologically impressive are not good for game flow and can result in you running the wrong way at some point in the game. The number of teams and leagues remain more limited than the competition, and the omission of an Australian team still sets my patriotic hackles rising. The game has an impressive array of strategic and shooting options but again this is a case of triumphing on the edges, rather than in the main game. On its release this was an also ran and it still is. At least it's now a cheap also ran - but for me, that's little comfort.

- Stretch Armstrong



GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
VALUE:	★★★

OVERALL: *Actua Soccer* is by no means a bad game, it's just that there are now so many better ones available.

6
OUT OF TEN

Toshinden

PUBLISHER:	Takara
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$49.95
GAME TYPE:	Fighting
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Going with the flow of classic PlayStation titles being re-released as part of the Platinum range, Takara's first foray into 3D fighting is out, and is possibly one to add to your collection if you're obsessed with beat 'em ups. Toshinden was the first game of its kind to use weapons, and despite its having features, it didn't take full advantage of, is nonetheless a fast and furious game to play.

There are eight contenders in this one, wielding such nasty pain-inflictors as clubs, claws, whips and knives as well as various swords. All are striving to beat the underground Battle Arena. Some fighting for those they love, others to discover their true destiny... They are well proportioned in that they look human enough, if scoring a little prism overlap.

Each person has an unblockable throw. They also each have about three special moves and a projectile attack, all of which are kinda flashy. They also have at least one super-duper special attack peculiar to each character - which takes about ten years to key in correctly, but almost seems worth it when you get it right. There are no pre-programmed combinations, but they are easy enough to improvise as you fight if you understand the four attack buttons: weak slash, heavy slash, weak kick and heavy kick. Basically, an effective combo starts with a weak and ends with a heavy.

This was ground-breaking stuff in its day, because it was the first to fully utilise its 3D factor with the inclusion of the left and right side-step buttons. This function makes it possible to evade a fireball which has your name on it or, at closer range, roll around a foe to catch their back off guard. Comprehending the importance of manoeuvrability, Takara also made running easy in this game. It should be noted that the four attack buttons perform a different move if your player is running. Another first this game boasts is the Desperation move. When the life meter is near its end, it starts to flash red, warning you of your impending death and also signalling that you should use your Desperation move. Slightly easier than the super-duper special moves, they are still difficult to pull off but most satisfying when they work.

The option menu is complete with auto-guard, up to seven rounds and four different camera options - three of which are unfathomably useless. Unfortunately, the bouts are all staged in a square ring which is all too easy to fall out of. The backdrops are not very soothing, but suit the spectacular feel of the game, and that's what this game is - spectacular, not realistic.

- Hillous



GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
VALUE:	★★★

OVERALL: *Toshinden's* not that bad, but has become very dated in light of more sophisticated games such as Tobal No.1 and Soul Blade.

5
OUT OF TEN

Air Combat

PUBLISHER:	Sony
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$49.95
GAME TYPE:	Flight sim/shooter
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Negcon
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Air Combat is another game from the early days of the PlayStation which is currently experiencing fresh popularity due to its re-release as part of the Platinum range of PlayStation games. Like many of the Platinum titles, Air Combat has a few age-related problems, but with the low cost of these titles, you can overlook a few little things.

In Air Combat, you are a mercenary pilot hired by a nameless country to fight an equally nameless enemy in a series of combat and tactical missions. As with most games in this style released over the last five years, Air Combat has a bit of a Gulf War feel to it with its 'blow up the oil wells in the desert' style missions.

Unfortunately, Air Combat does show its age. The intro is pure 16-bit and the graphics are fairly simple to the point of being Spartan. The head-up cockpit display works pretty well, giving a good sense of motion. Changing to the third person view, however, is less successful. In fact, it's pretty useless, as it's a case of the horizon moving around your plane rather than the other way around.

The sound effects in Air Combat are actually quite good. It has nice sounding explosions and suitably frenzied radio chatter which helps set the mood nicely. But, for some unfortunate reason, all this has been swamped by some of the lamest rock music of all time. Even worse, you can't turn it down or off.

In spite of all this, Air Combat is actually quite a fun and addictive game to play. While the control is a bit heavy, you'll soon be zooming around leaving trails of destruction in your wake. There are lots of different aircraft to choose from - a few MIGs, an F-14, F-15, F/A-18, etc, as well as Stealth Fighters and some other more unusual planes. The missions, whilst fairly similar, cover a variety of terrain (canyons, islands, deserts, cities) and a number of different targets, both in the air and on the ground. When you finish each mission you receive a financial reward, enabling you to buy/repair planes and hire wingmen to accompany you on your missions.

One major disappointment with Air Combat - both this time and the first time around - was the two player mode. It's just pathetically slow. It's so slow that you'd have to be pretty determined to play it in two-player more than once. Otherwise, Air Combat is fairly enjoyable for a game of its age and worth a look at the lower price.

- Don Pigleone



GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
VALUE:	★★★★

OVERALL: *Air Combat* was and still is a decent arcade-style flight sim. It may look quite rough next to the newer version, but still holds up quite well.

7
OUT OF TEN

Rayman

PUBLISHER:	Ubi Soft
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$49.95
GAME TYPE:	Platform
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	Or passwords
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Rayman was originally released in 1995, but with its re-release as part of the budget Platinum range, it's time to have a fresh look at the game.

In the world of Rayman, the Great Protoon and its protector, Betilla the Fairy, have been defeated by the evil Mr Dark. In the absence of the Great Protoon, the Electroons who used to gravitate around it have dispersed. As a result, reality breaks down, strange phenomena appear, and the whole universe looks set to collapse. You, as Rayman, must defeat the forces of evil and rescue the Great Protoon in this cartoon flavoured 2D platform game.

Although this is a two year-old game, the flat 2D graphics are actually quite a refreshing change from all the new 3D titles. The game is all fairly traditional psychedelic/cartoon platform stuff, but it's all very clear and colourful. Some of the worlds are particularly good looking, such as Band Land with the dastardly Mr Sax, and Picture City with its boss, Space Mama. Rayman himself is well depicted and smoothly animated.

As for the sound... well... it treads the fine line between distracting and annoying, but you can always turn the music off and leave the effects on. Of course, cheesy music is par for the course when playing cheesy platform games, so no surprises in this department.

The game itself covers fairly familiar territory. There are things to collect in lots of 100 to get an extra life (tings); things to collect six of per level which grant access to bonus stages (caged electroons); bosses to fight and, of course, all your favourite platforms. It can sometimes be quite viciously frustrating, but hey, that's platform games for you.

There are, inevitably, a few problems with Rayman which need to be addressed. Firstly, as Rayman progresses, you are given extra abilities and power ups. While there is nothing wrong with this as a concept, one of the abilities you have to wait for in Rayman is running. As a result, before you get this skill the game is very slow, and gamers weaned on the likes of Sonic the Hedgehog may find the going rather tedious for the first few levels.

At its reduced price, Rayman should be seen as a reasonable investment for the younger player who is more interested in playing a fun game than looking at one with the latest graphics.

- Don Pigleone

GRAPHICS:	★★★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★★
VALUE:	★★★

OVERALL: *Rayman* is a nice, cute platform game which doesn't pretend to be anything else. Good value, especially for younger players.

7
OUT OF TEN

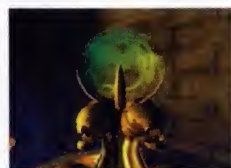
In the wake of Doom, developers are looking for other ways of presenting their clones. Tim Smith takes a look at two old worldy-styled examples.

PUBLISHER:	GTI
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$88.84
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Passwords
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	MA15+

Hexen



Fry, you evil bat creature that's flapping in my face. Fry!



Allo allo allo, is that an inter-dimensional time portal thingy you're falling into?

Hexen, a medieval Doom-clone, is a 3D action game with an interesting mix of Doom-esque action interwoven with elements of fantasy role-playing. Its main variance from the standard Doom-clone comes from the ability to choose from three different character classes for the hero. Each hero has his own strengths and weaknesses: 'Baratus' - the fighter, is the strongest and fastest of all the characters, but weak with magic; 'Daedolon' - the mage, is the most powerful with magic; 'Parias' - the cleric, has skills balanced between Baratus and Daedolon.

Once your character has been chosen, it's time to begin your quest to destroy Korax. The action takes place inside Korax's fortress, which is divided into different 'hubs'. Each hub provides access to several sub-levels, and all of these levels must be completed before you can access the next hub. At the end of each hub you will face one of the previous world leaders who must be destroyed before you can move on. This open level layout is the main difference between Hexen and other Doom-clones which require you to complete all the levels in a set sequence.

The gameplay is standard first-person shooting action. There is a good variety of

beasties to thwart and weapons to collect, but also, to the game's advantage, there are many artifacts which can be collected and stored in your inventory to use throughout the game. These include 'boots of speed', 'chaos devices' (teleporters) and even the fabled 'Porkelator' (it turns beasties into swine!). Other role-playing elements include the presence of an armour class which can be built up throughout the game and a super weapon that is created by collecting the scattered pieces throughout the levels. Magic also plays a big part in the gameplay and, like health, is accumulated by collecting the coloured vials which litter the levels.

Standard game options apply, as well as five difficulty levels. What makes or breaks all action-based 3D titles is their 3D graphics engine. In the case of Hexen, it is unfortunately this aspect which lets the game down. The scrolling is at the best of times jerky, and the graphics suffer from some pretty serious pixelation, especially when the monsters get too close. The music, however, is a well-themed medieval ditty, and the sound effects are quite adequate. Overall, Hexen is a unique variation on the Doom theme, and is worth a look for its novel approach.



Head to Head

One thing about both these games is that they can be considered quite good in terms of long-term play. With Hexen, you can play the game over again with a different character. With Exhumed, the sheer number of locations and places to explore is destined to keep you busy for hours. Both offer great atmosphere and enough variation in gameplay over the standard Doom 'point 'n shoot' gameplay, so consider checking out both. Overall, the division between the two games becomes most apparent when comparing graphics - in this category Exhumed comes out well on top. After you have played Hexen for a while, the lower frame rate and awful pixelation that plagues it becomes even more obvious and tiring to watch for extended periods. If you want something a little more than a straight Doom-clone, check either of these titles out, but if mindless violence is your choice, stick with Final Doom - you know exactly what you are getting.

Head To Head

Final Doom:	9
Lifeforce Tenka:	8
Exhumed:	8
Hexen:	6
Disruptor:	6
PO'ed:	5

HEXEN

■ GRAPHICS:	★★	■ OVERALL: 6
■ SOUND:	★★	
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★	
■ LIFESPAN:	★★★	
■ ORIGINALITY:	★★	

Exhumed



Hey, dog-face, cop this pointy stick in a soft part of your decaying body! You too, you nasty little blue critters jumping around like that!

Exhumed is not your typical 3D game, by that I mean it has a superior 3D engine to any similar game currently available on the PlayStation. How could it be described? In one word - WHOA! It is really fast and exceptionally smooth, and I couldn't detect much of a drop in frame rate while playing. It has indeed set a new benchmark for 3D game engines on the PlayStation. Best of all, there is little pixelation when you approach objects. The Egyptian atmosphere is rich, and the locales are embellished with all the trappings of Ancient Egypt - the architecture, statues, hieroglyphs and paintings all are wonderful to behold.

Once you have begun, it's time to get exploring. Progress throughout Exhumed is achieved predominantly by searching for and locating various keys and hidden walls. Hidden walls are revealed by shooting the pots of unstable oil (similar to the drums in Doom). In what appears to be inspired by Tomb Raider, there are death-defying leaps, jumps and, what is very cool, pools of water you can actually swim in.

Of course, the life of an alien exterminator wasn't meant to be easy, and throughout the levels there are many local denizens of meanies you

will face, including scorpions, birds of prey and piranhas. Of course, there are also the supernatural foes such as mummies, Anubis and the beautiful bikini-clad 'Guardians of Bast' (you won't be taking these gals home!). Oh, and what 3D action game would be complete without the boss guardians? To aid your ability to battle the inhabitants, you can find additional weapons that previous, less successful parties have left behind, such as the trusty M-60 and flamethrower, as well as other, more mythical, weapons.

Life and ammunition are represented on-screen by means of coloured bars. To replenish these, you can collect orbs which are left behind from either defeated enemies or exploded pots. There are also artifacts to

be found which enhance your abilities such as the ability to jump higher and better breathing underwater. Some of these artifacts include 'The Sandals of Ikumtet', 'Sobek's Mask', 'The Shawl of Isis', and 'The Horus Feather', which allows you to levitate! To save your game, you must find the camel on each level, which also allows you to travel between stages. The only options available are sound and music volume control. Unfortunately, no difficulty option exists.

Exhumed is a highly atmospheric game that really takes you back to Ancient Egypt. It's got an awesome 3D engine, killer graphics, great Egyptian soundtrack, a huge map to explore, not to mention those bikini-clad demons! What else could you possibly want?



PUBLISHER:	BMG
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$88.84
PLAYERS:	One
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	MA15+



Who needs a flashy rendered intro when you've got good old papyrus to print on!

EXHUMED

GRAPHICS:	★★★★	OVERALL:
SOUND:	★★★★	
GAMEPLAY:	★★★	
LIFESPAN:	★★★	
ORIGINALITY:	★★	

8
OUT OF TEN

Stretch Armstrong, here is this month's haul of soccer games. You know what to do.

PUBLISHER:	Gremlin
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$88.95
GAME TYPE:	Soccer
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G

Actua Soccer Club Edition



I do believe that someone has just scored a goal.



So many options, which one should I pick?

As you will read elsewhere in this fine publication, the original Actua Soccer was regarded by us as the runt of that year's soccer games litter. That year, if my memory serves me well, was 1996. Now we have the pleasure of reviewing the Actua Soccer Club Edition. Stop me if you've heard this one before, but the Actua Soccer Club Edition is Actua Soccer with Club teams rather than Actua Soccer with international teams. And, to further refine matters, it is just Clubs as in English Premier League clubs, no more, no less.

Now, you may be thinking, why is this so special if the original game was not much chop and FIFA already has every international team and every club from every significant competition in the

world? Why indeed? But it has season play, I say. But, you answer, very sharply, doesn't every sports sim in every sport have season play these days? Yes, I reply knowingly. So, you conclude, is Gremlin is trying to sell a not-very-good game by repackaging it with features that are not as thorough as the features that everyone else has had for ages anyway? Yes, I answer. But, you reply, that doesn't make it very attractive does it. No, I finish, it certainly does not.

And that, my friends, is it in a nutshell. What was the third best game in the league gets shunted back to fourth by ISS and decides to re-launch itself with a version not much better than the one before. If you haven't



guessed already, it's still in fourth.

The best things about Actua Soccer - the stadium graphics and the commentary - were not in the game. The commentary is even better, the stadium and in-game graphics are too. The gameplay, however, is still its downfall - yep, it's better - appreciably smoother and possibly faster too, but that jerky, frequently changing camera angle still wrecks it for me.

The ball still bounces ridiculously high and overall, it just doesn't feel like a sim. The number of teams and leagues is, as I said, trumpeted as a feature but it's way behind the opposition. The game still has an impressive array of strategic and shooting options but again this is mainly fluff when you consider that the guts of the game is just not there. Next to its competitors of a year ago it didn't shape up. With ISS on the scene it is, even with its improvements, well in the shade.

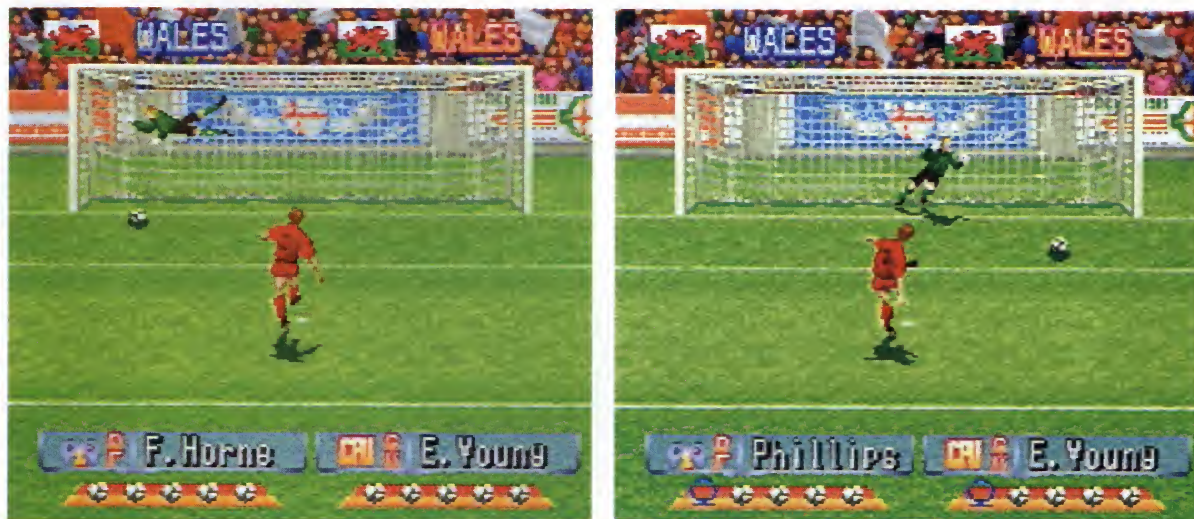


ACTUA SOCCER CLUB EDITION

■ GRAPHICS:	★★★★	■ OVERALL:
■ SOUND:	★★★	
■ GAMEPLAY:	★★★	
■ LIFESPAN:	★★	
■ ORIGINALITY:	★	

7
OUT OF TEN

Konami ISS Deluxe



Okay, everyone line up and I'll try and kick this ball into someone's head. It won't hurt, honest! Well, maybe for a second, but then you won't feel a thing.

Those of us who are rabid soccer sim fans are still wearing black arm bands to mark the fall from grace of FIFA '97. When the King dies, it's all very well to turn to the Prince, but if the Prince is pretty ugly too (especially if he's got big ears), then there's not a lot of joy for the commoners. In this tortured analogy, FIFA is the King and, by default (just), Adidas Power Soccer is the prince. We, it goes without saying, are the commoners. And at this point in history, to mix the metaphors even further, neither member of this patriarchal monarchy really fry our burger.

But hark! On the horizon, the cavalry is coming - and it's called International Superstar Soccer Deluxe. Sure, it's a mouthful, and a dreadfully boring name for a game (when will they release 'Up Yours Soccer' or 'Get Nicked Soccer'?), but what a game it is! Finally, along comes a soccer game which, while isn't revolutionary, at least brings the fun back to soccer on the new platforms. I'm digressing again, but as you read this, there is an even newer version of this game about to hit the streets, ISS Pro, allegedly with improved graphics and tougher gameplay. We'll see. In the meantime, this is hugely enjoyable. Whereas FIFA lost the plot in the hunt for

perfect graphics, this looks more like a cartoony arcade game. Whereas that lets down Actua Soccer, it works in favour for Jonah Lomu, Pete Sampras and now ISS Deluxe. It's okay, because even without motion capture technology, it's got emotion capturing gameplay, and it plays very, very smoothly and very, very quickly.

While this may not be as chock full of the options are now de rigueur in sports games and positively overflowing in FIFA, and even if the commentary is decidedly dodgy, this is fast, furious fun. While some of the complaints I make here damn the likes of Actua Soccer, ISS survives them with its gonads well intact. It's fast and tough enough to be a real challenge, and even with the arcade graphics it plays with realism and still has goal scoring

opportunities galore for the connoisseur.

This game is a triumph for gameplay over fancy graphics and is, all round, a complete delight. I love it and I know you will too.

(PS. If, at this point, any game developers would like to talk to me about my new role playing game involving kings, princes, cavalry and hamburgers, call me at the office.)



PUBLISHER:	Konami
RELEASE:	Out now
PRICE:	\$89.95
GAME TYPE:	Soccer
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	Yes
CONTROLLER:	Standard
CLASSIFICATION:	G



Konami ISS Deluxe

GRAPHICS:	★★★★	OVERALL:
SOUND:	★★★	
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★★	
LIFESPAN:	★★★★	
ORIGINALITY:	★★★	

9
OUT OF TEN



Can't decide which old Neo Geo beat 'em up to buy? To be honest, there really isn't much difference, but Don Pigleone is here to offer his opinion on the two latest contenders.

King of Fighters '95

PUBLISHER:	Takara
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Beat 'em up
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



It seems kind of odd that a game from 1995 is being released at a time when we're not far away from seeing the '98 updates of games, but this is indicative of the dilemma which faces King of Fighters '95. With the growing emphasis on 3D fighting games, the 2D predecessors are having a tough time competing and although they still retain many supporters, they appear destined to end up on the video games scrap heap.

Despite this, King of Fighters '95 is a fairly decent example of the genre and should provide some entertainment for 2D fighting game fans, but suffers from looking just too familiar. Due to the number of high quality games in this style released over the years, it's hard for this game to appear fresh or innovative. And when you compare it to the obvious 3D competitors, there's little contest at all.



KoF '95 was one of the better SNK fighting games to appear in the arcades and the PlayStation version is a fairly faithful conversion. It's fast, and the animation appears to have lost only a few frames. There is a very large number of characters to choose from and all the fighters have oodles of special moves which will be more than familiar to anyone brought up on the classic Street Fighter games.

King of Fighters '95 has (had?) a decent following in the arcades, so if you've been waiting for a console version you'll most likely enjoy it on the PlayStation. Similarly, those who hanker after the side-scrolling Street Fighter-style beat 'em up will find KoF '95 to offer a reasonably entertaining change, but it certainly doesn't better the latest Alpha 2 version of Capcom's classic. Had this game been released a year or so ago it would definitely have been worth a look, but with the likes of Tekken, Tobal and Soul Blade making their presence felt, you'd have to be pretty determined to pass them over in favour of this.

GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

OVERALL: *King of Fighters '95* is a fairly good old-style beat 'em up, but it looks very dated next to all the new 3D fighting games.

5

OUT OF TEN

Fatal Fury Real Bout

PUBLISHER:	Takara
RELEASE:	Now
PRICE:	\$79.95
GAME TYPE:	Beat 'em up
PLAYERS:	One or two
MEMORY CARD:	No
CONTROLLER:	Joypad
CLASSIFICATION:	M15+



The Fatal Fury series has been around for quite a while now, doing good business in the arcades on the Neo Geo machines. Like the King of Fighters series, Fatal Fury is produced by SNK and these two games share more than just the same parent company. Both feature many of the same characters and a similar approach to the basic concept of the game.

While it's difficult to make a 2D beat 'em up look fresh in this world of Tobals and Tekkens, SNK has gone to some lengths to try to make RBFF stand out from the (very large) pack in what is an increasingly archaic genre. The first thing which aids RBFF in this quest is your ability to move into the background and foreground, rather than just walking up and down in a straight line. It's a long way from 3D movement, but it helps make the game a bit more flexible. Another point in RBFF's favour is the enormous amount of special moves available. I also enjoyed the specials feature which allows you to assign the specials to shoulder buttons, thus giving you the ability to execute all those bone crushing moves without giving yourself arthritis before the end of the first round. I almost always find, however, one particular major problem with this sort of game: no matter how accomplished you become, all you usually have to do is bash the controls randomly at high speed to beat a seemingly unbeatable opponent.

On the production side of things, RBFF does quite well, with decent graphics and fair animation. The sound is a mixed bag. There are suitably beefy sound effects, though the music ranges from extremely nasty to curiously entertaining. Overall, RBFF is fairly successful in its goals and should be fairly well received by fans of the style. Although, even the appearance of a decent 2D fighting game like this feels a bit like looking at a soon to be extinct animal in a zoo.



GRAPHICS:	★★★
SOUND:	★★★
GAMEPLAY:	★★★
LIFESPAN:	★★
ORIGINALITY:	★

OVERALL: *Fatal Fury Real Bout* is another fairly decent example of a dated genre. But do people still buy these sort of games anymore?

6

OUT OF TEN

DOUBLE TROUBLE!

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- PLAY MAGAZINE



M15+



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We've got 10 Fatal Fury packs to give away, each containing a copy of Fatal Fury: The Motion Picture, a Fatal Fury T-Shirt and a Fatal Fury cap, just like the one Terry Bogard wears in the game!

There are also 5 copies of the video for runner-up prizes.

All you have to do to win is send us a photograph of yourself dressed up like someone from the game! Our manly model, Carl, seen here holding and wearing the goodies, is demonstrating his most threatening pose, but we're sure you can do better. Send your stunning snapshots to:

*PlayStation Toughman
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78 Renwick St,
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CONDITIONS OF ENTRY:

1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand.
2. Entries must be received by October 8, 1997.
3. Employees of Next Media and CEL may not enter.
4. The Judge Joe Higashi's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into.



CRAZY OR FUNKY?!

PaRappa The Rapper is an unusual game. Not surprisingly, the man who created it is also a bit unusual. His name is Masaya Matsuura, and he was the only person wearing a bright blue jacket when we met him at Sony's HQ in Tokyo. We opened up his head and took a look inside to see what makes him tick.



Mr Matsuura is a 36 year-old graduate in Industrial Sociology who has been making music for much of his life. In 1983 he started his professional music career by forming the group PYS-S with vocalist Chaka. The group released nine albums, and Matsuura has also produced much original music for other artists, as well as advertisements and films. In 1993 he released his first CD-ROM title, The Seven Colors, which was followed by two more 'multi-media' titles. In December of 1996 PaRappa The Rapper was released in Japan to much praise and popularity, and has become a cult icon for the PlayStation.



PSM: PaRappa the Rapper is different from any other game we've seen, what was your inspiration?

MM: I wanted to create something new by myself, something from scratch, which didn't use anyone else's ideas.

PSM: Were there any restrictions imposed on you in creating the game software?

MM: I had total freedom to create the game, but by gaining this freedom I was faced with the inevitable technical restrictions imposed by the hardware.

PSM: What do you think of the PlayStation's sound chip?

MM: It's good, but I prefer to use the CD for storing music as it offers more potential.

PSM: Have you seen any evidence of PaRappa influencing other game designers?

MM: Not much as yet, but I hope other game designers will be inspired to try something different.

PSM: Do you think that PaRappa has entered the mainstream?

MM: Well, one day I was walking along the street and I heard a couple of school girls humming a tune. I didn't realise it at first, but later on I realised it was the theme to PaRappa they were singing!

PSM: What foreign game has most impressed you the most?

MM: Wipeout XL, I like the game very much and I think the music in it is very suitable.

PSM: What would you be doing if you weren't writing music and games?

MM: I would probably be just another salaryman!



WILD STYLE

The distinctive style of artwork used throughout the game came from the mind of Rodney A. Greenblatt, an American artist specialising in electronic media. To see more of his twisted work, visit his web site at: www.whimsyload.com

Blasto

PUBLISHER: Sony CATEGORY: 3D Platform
RELEASE: November PLAYERS: One

Tucked into a corner of Sony's massive stand at E3 was the Blasto display. Surrounded on both sides by banks of demonstrator machines playing the game was a huge rocket ship, like the classic-styled ones of the 50s. At its base was a big, shiny red button, and next to it was a sign which read: "DO NOT PRESS" The majority of

visitors who passed by took a bewildered look at the structure and then moved on, scratching their heads. Of course, there were plenty of weak-minded fools (including ourselves) who couldn't resist the obvious temptation.

It's this sort of silly humour that is the trademark of the Blasto game, and the lead character is none other than Captain Blasto, a testosterone fuelled intergalactic do-gooder who is naturally on a never-ending quest to rid the universe of all that is foul

and rotten smelling. Adding the human touch to Blasto is the voice behind him, none other than Phil Hartman of The Simpson's fame (Phil does the voices of Troy McClure and Lionel Hutz, among many others). As Blasto jumps from platform to platform, he continuously spouts smug one-liners appropriate to his current situation.

The graphics are similarly off-beat, with the artists aiming for that weird look of the old Looney Tunes

cartoons of Marvin the Martian. The 3D environment is designed with large, flat areas which have minimal texture mapping but lots of smooth shading, similar to that in Tobal No. 1. Whether or not this style appeals to you is a matter of personal taste, but we found Blasto to be a refreshing change from the masses of games which cram so much detail in that they start looking messy. You'll be able to make your own mind up when the game is released later this year.



Nightmare Creatures

PUBLISHER: Sony CATEGORY: Hack 'n' Slash
RELEASE: November PLAYERS: One

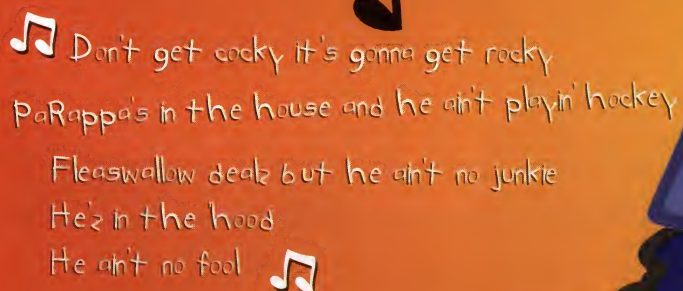
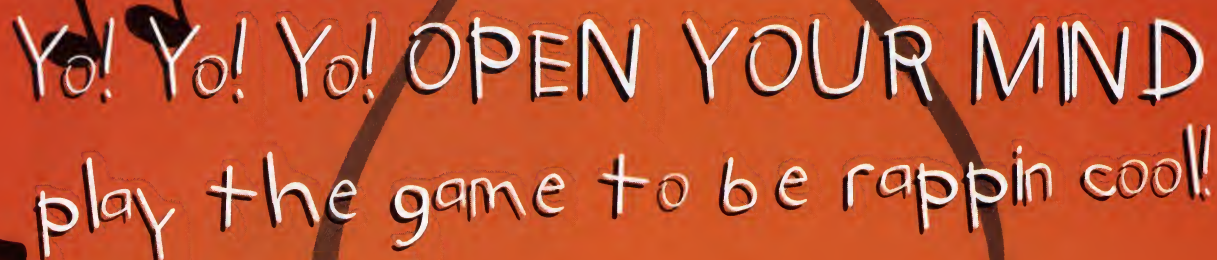
Taking elements from Resident Evil and Mortal Kombat, Nightmare Creatures is the latest bloody offering in the gory game stakes. The game is essentially a beat 'em up for one person set over a series of open 3D levels in which the player is free to roam around on a killing spree. Your victims are already dead, however, for they have been summoned from the depths of Hell by one Adam Crowley, a 17th century practising Satanist and the leader of the New Brotherhood of Hecate. Obviously this chap has gone round the bend, so it's up to you, the renowned theologian Ignatius Blackwood, to put a stop to his tampering with forces beyond mortal comprehension. To do this, you have a very big stick.

Developed by French developer

Kalisto Entertainment, the first thing that struck us about Nightmare Creatures when we saw it at E3 was the stunningly high level of detail on the characters and how quickly they moved around. The graphic style replicates the look and feel of Victorian London, with a real gritty, gothic atmosphere pervading the entire game.

Much of the game involves searching through each level for hidden keys and switches, but the real meat of the game is the combat against the legion of undead. Zombies rise from the ground, werewolves spring out from behind tombstones and other huge and ghastly monsters come lumbering after you. Fighting is accomplished with a strike and kick button (which combine to offer many interesting and painful combos), but there are also power-ups in the form of magic and good old hot lead. We eagerly await the final version!





* playStation™ exclusive

PA RAPPATHE RAPPER



Peace-Respect-Love



Gex 3D: Enter the Geko

PUBLISHER: Crystal Dynamics CATEGORY: 3D Platform
RELEASE: November PLAYERS: One

Well, it seems this lithe little chap is the only real survivor to have had any success after being born on the ill-fated 3DO system. Gex, 'the lizard with attitude', has finally made it into the world of fully functional 3D exploration, as his new PlayStation game subtitled 'Enter the Gecko' will feature a polygonal Gex leaping about the place performing over 120 moves.

Even though the preview version of Gex we managed to get our impatient little hands on had only a few levels available, it was surprisingly solid and impressive looking enough to rival Mario 64. Quite possibly, this is because the lizard has a whopping 3400 frames of animation to keep him moving fluidly.

American cable TV comedian Dana Gould is back to play the voice of our hero, and in this game Gex

apparently has over 500 snappy one-liners and smart-alec comments to keep you chuckling. Gex will also use lip-syncing technology so his mouth movements actually match the sound.

Enter the Gecko will still follow the B-grade cable TV scenario formula presented in the original, but Gex will be able to stick to a variety of surfaces in real 3D which could make things quite interesting. The game will also support the PlayStation's analog controller, so it's reasonable to assume that you will be able to determine the speed that Gex can run at (always a good thing). The game will see Gex being hassled by his old enemy Rez again, but the developers have promised a twist in the story, and lots of new traps that exploit the 3D format. Gex should be walking around inside your TV fairly soon and once you see him in action you'll give up any plans you may have had to buy a Nintendo 64!



Tomb Raider 2

PUBLISHER: Eidos CATEGORY: 3D Action
RELEASE: November PLAYERS: One

This title was first shown to the public at the '97 E3 expo, and by jove did it have a lot of industry people gawping at it with slack-jawed anticipation. It comes as no surprise that after her successful debut, the Lara Croft we all know and love is due to return to the small screen. Tomb Raider 2 promises more of the same 3D

gameplay that blew most of us away last year, but there will also be quite a few enhancements. The sequel will feature new weapons (like the water harpoon), bigger levels, more enemies, and an improved graphic engine (which has the ability to pull off some rather tasty light sourcing effects). Tomb Raider 2 should also be more densely populated with targets (the original was a bit sparse at times), and best of all, many more of your enemies

will be human - something we are all sure to love. Complaints about the somewhat stiff response in the first game have been addressed and Lara is now much more nimble, though in the E3 demo she still had the tendency to get stuck on the edge of doorways if you didn't line her up.

Tomb Raider 2 should be here by the end of the year, and we think it will probably find itself under more than a few Christmas trees.



Jurassic Park: The Lost World

PUBLISHER: Dreamworks CATEGORY: Platform/action

RELEASE: October PLAYERS: One

By and large, sequels to films are rarely as stimulating as the original. Jurassic Park: The Lost World, however, was a pleasant exception to this rule, and the game also looks like it will reverse the trend of poor film-to-game conversions.

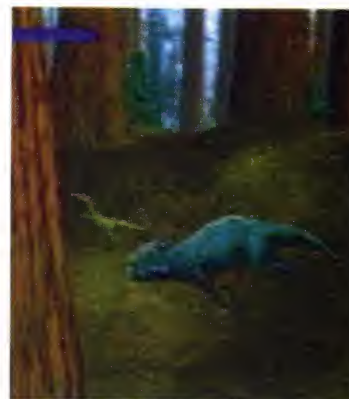
The game is for the most part a side-scrolling platform game, however it offers players something they rarely get the chance to do - be the baddie. The baddie in this case is the massive T-

Rex from the films, and when you get the chance to control it you can go on a rampage, eating all the annoying humans in your path! Before you get to be the baddest dino of them all, you must first play as other dinos lower on the feeding chain. Starting with the cute little Compy, you also get to be a Raptor and a mystery monster, as well as the ubiquitous two-legged human armed with a gun.

The game's producers have taken particular care to make the characters as life-like as possible and all are based on the creatures created for the film. The animation is fast and

surprisingly realistic, so much so to the degree that the dinosaur's skin appears to stretch and fold as it walks along. It looks even better when they jump, run and chomp down unfortunate hunters in a couple of grizzly gulps!

The Lost World has been in development for quite some time already and, judging from the number of delays, it would appear that Dreamworks is working overtime to ensure their game is outstanding in all respects. The game should be out fairly soon and we'll have the full review next issue.



Pandemonium 2

PUBLISHER: Crystal Dynamics CATEGORY: Platform

RELEASE: TBA PLAYERS: One or two

In light of all the attention a certain Tomb Raising femme fatale we all know has been receiving of late, the creators of Pandemonium have taken note. It seems Fargus and Nikki have continued their travels together, and over the years Nikki has

grown into quite a well developed young woman. Fargus is, well, still Fargus, but the ugly old jester never saw much action anyway.

Pandemonium 2 expands on the ideas introduced in the first, with its way cool 3D platform perspective, adding a new look to the backgrounds and even more incredible view points as you progress through the levels. Both characters have all the moves from the first game, including Nikki's double jump and Fargus' cartwheel attack. Since then they have added a few more moves to their repertoire, and can now swing across bars, hang from ledges and swim. Another much needed improvement has been made to Fargus' puppet cane Sid, who can now fire puppet heads at enemies.

The levels have more goals than just getting to the end of the stage:



mysterious creatures which have been imprisoned must be freed from their cages, and this adds a puzzle element to the game with the layouts more intricate than the first offering, such as multiple paths to traverse.

The style of the game is set in a more futuristic setting. Each level is huge and more deviously designed than before. But the most interesting new addition to the game is the Mech levels, where you suit up in a

giant mech suit and fly through 3D twisting mazes, armed with missiles - this we like!

As a sequel, Pandemonium 2, improves on all the aspects of gameplay, but to whether it can emulate its predecessor's success won't be known until we see the full version. Join Nikki and Fargus on their quest for the Comet of Infinite Possibilities, coming soon to a PlayStation near you!



Apocalypse

PUBLISHER: **Activision** CATEGORY: **Action**RELEASE: **TBA** PLAYERS: **One**

How would you like to star in the next action blockbuster with Bruce Willis as your side-kick? Well, here's your chance - sort of. You play 'The Kid' starring along side Bruce Willis as 'Trey Kincaid' in this 3D character-based action/shoot 'em up. In the dark future, society has split into two factions: science and religion. 'The Evil Reverend' is gathering the forces of the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse - Death, Plague, War and The Beast - with the intent of ending humanity. It's up to you and Bruce to stop them.

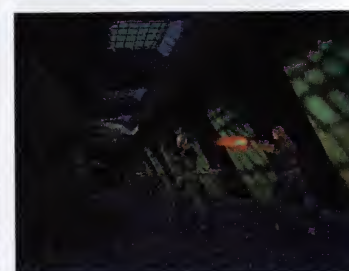
Activision has been working on several new game innovations for Apocalypse, including computer controlled characters which move and act with the same degree of freedom as the player. Also promised is cinematic camera viewing, which offers isometric, top down, free roaming and side-on tracking views. The game will also be utilising an asynchronous loading engine, which allows the game to load in the background during gameplay, thus delivering uninterrupted action without loading delays.

As in all of Bruce Willis' movies,

the weapons are awesome and the explosions are larger than life. To quote one of the developers, Apocalypse has "The coolest real time flame thrower ever seen!". The animation of some of the enemies is well done and the control of your character has obviously been well thought out. To fire, for example, you use your four buttons to indicate the firing direction and if you fire forward and then to the side, your character

will sweep round whilst firing rather than instantly start firing to the side.

Although the work in progress disc that we received had only a few rooms to explore, we've been suitably impressed. A thumping soundtrack accompanies the carnage as you fight your way through prisons, sewers and factories, all detailed in a neo-gothic theme. This game is definitely one to look out for in the near future - let us prey there is one!



The Wild 9

PUBLISHER: **Interplay** CATEGORY: **Platform**RELEASE: **Q4 97** PLAYERS: **One**

The Wild 9 is the first 32-bit platform game from Shiny Entertainment, (the company which brought us Earthworm Jim), and if you liked that series of games, this one will blow you away.

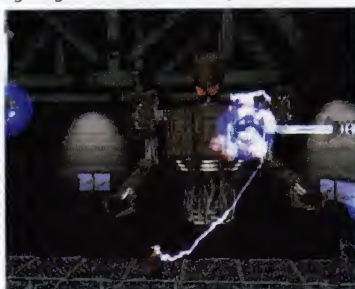
The Wild 9 focuses on the life of the lead character Wex Major, a human who is trapped in another space time dimension. He finds himself in the middle of a galactic war which is being won by a nasty tyrant by the name of Karn. Wex befriends eight alien beings who are out for revenge after their home worlds have been destroyed by Karn, so you can safely say that Wex will be in the firing line for much of the

game. An interesting, though possibly disturbing aspect of the game, which is stated in the press release is a quote from recent Shiny boss Dave Perry: "The Wild 9 is the first game where you can actually TORTURE your enemies..." Sounds fair enough.

According to Shiny, The Wild 9 is going to have more in-game

animation than any other game in the genre. Claims are already being made that the game will feature over 7000 frames of animation which should ensure a smooth visual experience, and we hope as much effort has been put into the rest of the game. Even though the sample on display at E3 was in a very unfinished form, it is hard to

discount the ability of game developer guru Dave Perry's team when you look at their track record (Earthworm Jim, and the under-rated PC classic MDK). Much like Earthworm Jim, The Wild 9 game will also be used as the starting point for a TV series, and possibly a film, as the artwork for the characters is unique and of quite a bizarre style.



Croc

PUBLISHER: Fox Interactive CATEGORY: 3D Platform

RELEASE: October PLAYERS: One

"It's a 3D Yoshi game on the PlayStation!" This was the first thing which came to mind when we saw this game previewed at the rather crowded (and unbelievably noisy) Fox stand at E3. A year ago there were serious doubts hanging over the PlayStation's ability to do a Mario 64-style open area 3D Platform game, but titles like Croc and Gex 3D prove beyond a doubt that developers are still managing to squeeze quite a bit of previously untapped potential out of the machine. Croc looks like being quite a charming 3D romp where you play the eponymous rampaging reptile.

The premise of the game is that Croc has a problem, and this problem is a complete bastard called Baron Dante, who is out to fry Croc's scaly butt and enslave his friends. Being a

platform game, this means that Croc has to go hopping about the place exploring a variety of differently themed worlds, while bashing up any enemies who try to hassle him along the way. The game sees you exploring a variety of islands (much like Crash Bandicoot), and each island is a hideout for a significant boss. Interestingly, once you have beaten each boss, they will help Croc on his quest to catch Dante.

Even at the unfinished state we saw at E3, Croc was very smoothly animated and the fully navigable 3D worlds surprised a few Nintendo pundits who thought the PlayStation wasn't quite up to this high level of presentation. Even though this one has a pretty standard game design (think plumber meets bandicoot), it still sounds intriguing and will surely be worth a look. The game will feature 50 levels (with a few hidden bits), and it should be here any day now.



Overboard

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis CATEGORY: Multi-player

RELEASE: October PLAYERS: One to five

There's one sort of game that is sorely lacking on the PlayStation, and that is multi-player games in which all the action takes place on the same screen. The most famous example of this style is, without a doubt, Bomberman. A more recent example (and one that's on the PlayStation, too), is Micro Machines V3. The premise behind both these games is, in no uncertain terms, to screw over your opponents. Even in Micro Machines, the racing comes second to pushing your 'mate' over the edge. It's this teeth-baring ferocity that makes these sort of games hugely enjoyable, and the more players who can join in the better.

Well, the PlayStation is still waiting for a version of Bomberman, but for now Psygnosis has come to the rescue with a quirky little boat title called Overboard. In this game you take the helm of an old galleon and get to explore a series of islands in search of sunken treasure. Along the way you have to defend yourself



from dangerous sea creatures and other pirates. That's the single-player mode. The multi-player game simply puts up to five players in an enclosed bay to fight it out to the last boat left leaking. No rules, just sail around letting off broadsides at each other! There are plenty of extra weapons to collect, such as flame throwers, oil slicks, depth charges, a Quake-esque electric mozzie zapper and more. There are also man-made hazards to avoid like circular saws, and portals which zip you from one side of the screen to the other.

Overboard has been one of the most frequently played games in the office of late and we'll have the full review in our next issue. In the meantime, you have the opportunity to get a taste of its salty seas with the demo included on this issue's cover CD.



Colony Wars

PUBLISHER: **Psygnosis** CATEGORY: **Spaceflight sim**
 RELEASE: **November** PLAYERS: ?

You may be familiar with Darklight Conflict (reviewed in this issue), or the Commodore 64 3D space combat classic, Elite. It certainly seems like Psygnosis is familiar with these games, as their big spaceflight combat sim, Colony Wars, looks like it may be inspired by these titles. Speculation aside, Colony Wars is shaping up as a stunningly detailed, fast paced 3D combat-fest of a very high calibre. The game will run at a way smooth 30 frames per second,

and despite this there should be lots of detail on the spacecraft.

Colony Wars sees you on the side of the League of Free Worlds, fighting against an oppressive government. However, the twist is that you are attacking the Earth, and you represent the off-world settlers who are sick of Earth's economic and political domination. There will be over 70 missions to play over five solar systems to go whizzing about in, as well as 15 minutes of pre-rendered storyboard animation. There is also a variety of natural space phenomena like asteroids, different looking planets and even the odd nebulae.

The game will give you six different combat craft to play with, with each craft having distinct handling configurations and weapon arrays. This should help you cope with the many different mission types, including scouting sorties, straight dog fighting, stealth missions, bomber raids, and interceptor attacks.

Having seen Colony Wars at E3, the early results are very promising, as the craft handled very nimbly and the lighting effects (especially the gun fire) looked superb. Colony Wars will also have half-a-dozen different endings which will be dependent on your actions during the game, as the

missions are structured in a non-linear way, which should add to the replay value of the game considerably.



Rascal

PUBLISHER: **Psygnosis** CATEGORY: **3D Platform**
 RELEASE: **'98** PLAYERS: **One**

It's platform time again, dude! Rascal is Psygnosis' entry in the '3D-polygon platform-character-with-attitude-genre'. Apparently, the concept for Rascal was put together by Jim Henson's design studio, Creature Workshop.

You play as Rascal, the cheeky, backwards baseball cap-wearing son of an eminent scientist. One day, instead of doing what you're told and not fiddling with things in your dad's lab, you decide to give his latest creation (a time machine) a whirl. Before you know it, you find yourself being transported to a variety of realms (some set in the past, some in the present, and some set in the sinister future). Here you discover an evil plot (why are there no good plots out there?) to twist the course of future history by changing the past. Anyway, predictably contrived storylines aside, Rascal looks like being a solid Mario-esque platformer for the PlayStation.

The game sees you doing the platform thing in seven different worlds (including platform favourites such as the Medieval castle, the Wild



West, a Pirate Ship, and a Prehistoric world). Each world also exists in three different time spheres, which make up a total of 21 different worlds to explore. Rascal promises to be smooth (the development team are aiming for 60 frames per second clarity), and colourful as up to 232,000 - count 'em - colours are used on screen at once. Although it still has a way to go before it is completed, Rascal is already looking quite promising. Perhaps we have finally found Mario's long lost illegitimate love child? See for yourself when the game is released early next year.



Psybadek

PUBLISHER: **Psygnosis** CATEGORY: **Snowboarding**
 RELEASE: **'98** PLAYERS: **One**

Move over Cool Boarders, those legends from Psygnosis are back with Psybadek! This game not only has a rather weird name, it also looks like being a little bit unusual when it comes to the actual game. Psybadek looks like the hybrid offspring of Crash Bandicoot

and Twisted Metal (with a touch of Mario 64 thrown in for good measure).

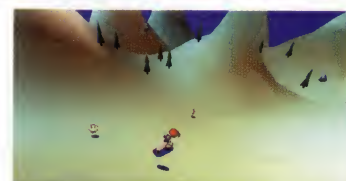
Psybadek is promising to be something of an original game, and it looks like Psygnosis' claims might be justified. Psybadek not only looks pretty smooth, the idea behind is a pretty decent one. During the game you will be able to use the undulating snowscapes (and the downhill momentum they offer) as a playground



for a variety of offensive 'stunts' which can be used to attack enemies, and help you gain bonus items.

The game sees you snowboarding about the place pulling stunts, fighting baddies, negotiating obstacles, and trying to find secret locations. It can be played using two characters (Mia and Xako), and the snowboarding action is presented in 3D from a third person perspective.

Psybadek will also feature lots of context sensitive rave style music, and you'll have your chance to be poppin' 720s in early 1998.



Shadow Master

PUBLISHER: **Psygnosis** CATEGORY: **3D Shooter**
 RELEASE: **?** PLAYERS: **One or Two**

If you liked the special lighting effects and techno wizardry of Lifeforce Tenka, then Shadow Master, the new 3D first-person perspective shooter from Psygnosis, is also likely to blow you away. This time you have been given an upgrade, transportation-wise as, instead of being on foot, you are behind the controls of a high tech assault buggy.

Shadow Master is set in a world inspired by Rodney Mathews (who is apparently well known as a creative designer), and even though the details of the milieu are sketchy, the whole thing is just a premise for lots of good old in-your-face

violence. Shadow Master sees you as the planet protector on seven worlds which are being stripped of their natural resources by an (undoubtedly) evil source. On each of these worlds you have to destroy many evil minions (including weird looking spiders, dragons and these typhid things) before you get to confront each planet's boss character. Shadow Master may sound conventional (and generally 3D games featuring cars instead of characters on foot tend to play pretty badly when compared to their bipedal counterparts), but the game was a lot of frantic fun when we looked at it earlier this year. The fact that your battle cart has the ability to strafe (with wheels?!) helps to make the gameplay a lot



more familiar and enjoyable to Doom devotees.

The game and everything in it is made entirely of polygons, and your

foes are superbly light-sourced and detailed. Shadow Master will feature 16 missions, and there is talk of a two-player head-to-head mode.



Street Fighter EX Alpha Plus

PUBLISHER: **Capcom** CATEGORY: **Beat 'em up**
 RELEASE: **November** PLAYERS: **One or two**

At last! The fabled Street Fighter series has made the jump into 3D. The arcade edition of Street Fighter EX hit the streets some time ago now, but has only just made it to the PlayStation. There is a difference, however, for the PlayStation game has a number of new additions. Most importantly, especially for the fans, is the inclusion of a couple of old

characters from past Street Fighter games. The rubber-limbed Dhalsim makes a welcome return from the first game, as does school girl Sakura, who first appeared in Street Fighter Alpha 2. There are also a number of new characters, including the brilliantly named Skullomania, who appears to be a guy wearing a skeleton suit. Odd. All your favourite moves and specials are back, and look better than ever. And you get to see Guile's flat top in 3D, too!

Players have dreamed for years

of seeing their favourite fighters in 3D, and now it's finally happened. The question is, "how has it affected the gameplay?" The reply is "not much". Although the fighters are all in 3D, the fighting is still the old one-on-one style, so anyone hoping for a Street Fighter version of Tobal may be a little disappointed. But taken for what it is - a 2D beat 'em up with 3D graphics - SF EX Alpha Plus is great fun and we can't wait to get back to our research on it for next issue's review.



Resident Evil Director's Cut

PUBLISHER: **Capcom** CATEGORY: **Horror**
 RELEASE: **November** PLAYERS: **One**

For all readers who are anxiously awaiting Resident Evil 2, Capcom has got something to keep your interest until the sequel to one of the biggest selling PlayStation titles hits next year. What they've got is a re-release of the first game, which features remixed gameplay and also contains the original, uncut Japanese version entitled Bio Hazard. The remixing refers to an increase in the level of difficulty, new camera angles in some of the rooms, and alternate placement of

some items and objects. The uncut bits will apparently include extra rendered sequences depicting decapitated heads rolling around and other gory stuff, although this version has yet to face the prickly Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification. When it does, we'll let you know what, if any, scenes have been censored (for your protection, of course).

You may well be thinking "Hmm, this sounds like Capcom milking its bloody cow for all it's worth!", but there is something else included which makes the proposition more attractive, and that is a demo of Resident Evil 2.



Win a Mouthful!

To celebrate the release of Jurassic Park: The Lost World on PlayStation, **Electronic Arts** has kindly given us a PlayStation and copies of the game to give away!

First prize

- * One PlayStation
- * One copy of Jurassic Park: The Lost World
- * One EA Sports jacket

Five second prizes

- * One copy of Jurassic Park: The Lost World
- * One EA Sports soft jacket



CONDITIONS OF ENTRY:

1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand.
2. Entries must be received by October 8, 1997.
3. Employees of Next Media and Electronic Arts may not enter.
4. The T-Rex's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into.

To win, tell us how many cows you think this T-Rex has eaten for breakfast. Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to the following address:
T-Rex Breakfast Comp PlayStation Magazine 78 Renwick St Redfern, NSW 2016

ELECTRONIC ARTS

DOMINATE THE SKIES!



Have you seen the new Dominator joystick yet? It looks very smart, and best of all it works beautifully with Namco's new arcade-style flight sim for the PlayStation, Ace Combat 2. And, wouldn't you know it, we've got four Dominator joysticks and four copies of Ace Combat 2 to give away to four lucky readers!

HOW TO WIN: Simply draw a picture of a couple of fighter jets in action on the front of an envelope and send it to the following address:

I Rule The Skies! Comp, PlayStation Magazine, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016



Conditions of entry: 1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand. 2. Entries must be received by October 8, 1997. 3. Employees of Next Media, Logic 3 and Sony Computer Entertainment may not enter. 4. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into.

WIN BIG TROUSERS!

VIRGIN INTERACTIVE has kindly offered six readers the chance to win an Agent Armstrong Big Trousers pack. Each pack contains a copy of Agent Armstrong for the PlayStation, a Virgin Interactive T-Shirt and a trouser load of other cool Agent Armstrong goodies!

To win, we want you to draw a picture of Agent Armstrong wearing big, baggy trousers. Draw your picture on an envelope and send it to:

*Big Trousers Comp, PlayStation Magazine
78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016*



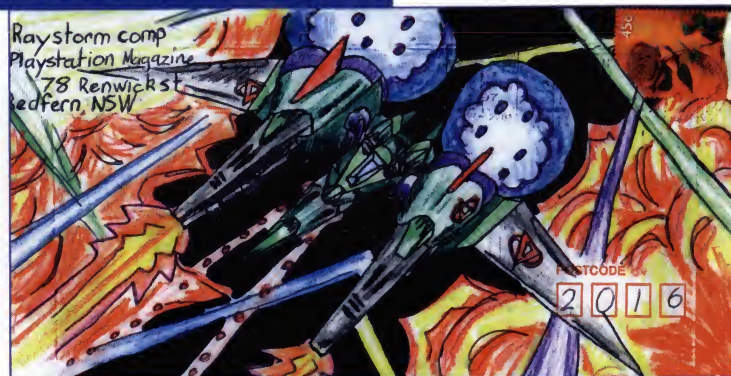
CONDITIONS OF ENTRY: 1. This competition is open to all residents of Australia and New Zealand. 2. Entries must be received by October 8, 1997. 3. Employees of Next Media and Virgin Interactive may not enter. 4. Agent Armstrong's decision is final and no correspondence may be entered into.

READER ART

Last issue's competition to draw either one of the spacecraft from **Raystorm** or a fighter from **Toshinden 3** brought many fine entries to our doorstep. Here are the five winners for each. Thanks to everyone who entered and even if your pic isn't here, well done because we loved them all!

Raystorm winners

Peter Conti of Kingswood, NSW



Trent Cooper of Port Macquarie, NSW



Tony Bernabei of Gladstone, Qld

John Kalten of Scoresby, Vic



Isaac Mutton of Goodwood, SA

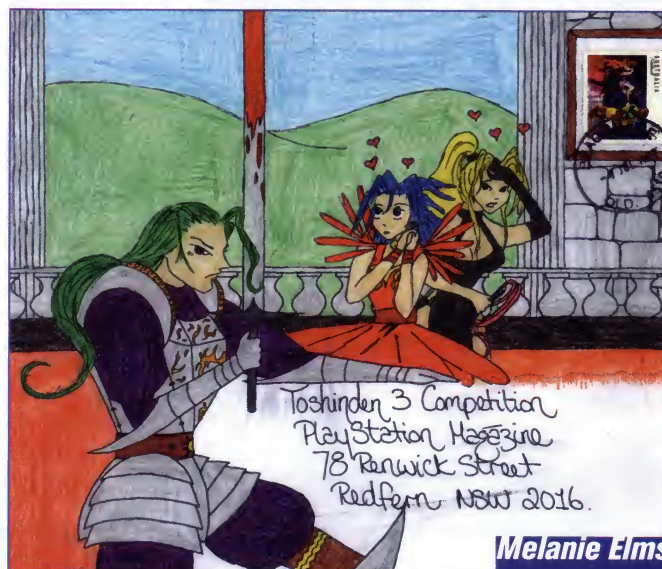


Toshinden 3 winners

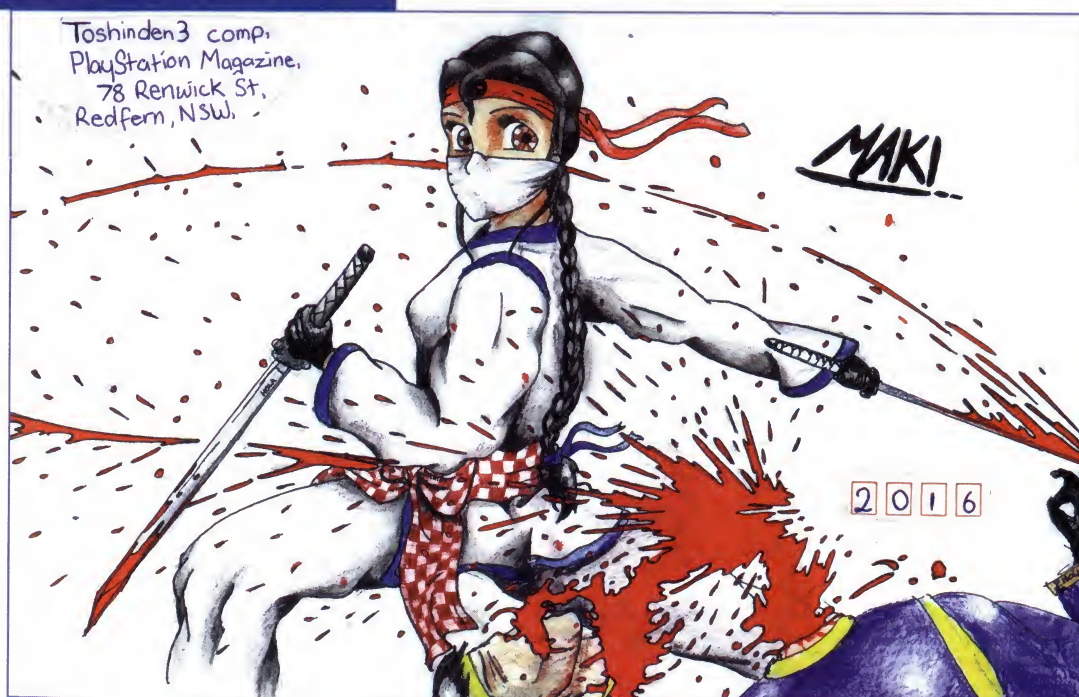
Luke Schatkowski of Kilkivan, Qld



Rattanak Chhay of Camden Park, SA



Dylan Holloway of Drysdale, Vic



Melanie Elms of Caboolture, Qld



Callum Fergusson-Stewart of Eastwood, SA



Cool PaRappa envelope art from someone who forgot to put their name on it - d'oh!

Of all the letters we received since the last issue, nearly half were in reply to a letter sent in by someone calling themselves "Tha Bad Guy". While we could have filled an entire magazine with your indignant rants, we've selected a quote from one letter which is a fair representation of your feelings. Amanda L. writes in reply to Tha Bad Guy: "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but in your case you take it to the point where nobody cares!"

That said, onto some decent letters!

WE ARE THE RUNNING DOG LACKEYS OF SONY!

Dear all at PlayStation Magazine, Having browsed through issue #4, I was absolutely appalled to see it written that the shaking feature on the PlayStation analog pad is "superfluous". I highly doubt that this is the view of Sony of Japan. It more probably reflects your own views, or you are covering up the poor discretion and lack of independence of Sony of Australia.

The reason why the Australian analogue pad will not be released with the shaker feature is because the American version won't be coming out with it. This is due to the threat of a lawsuit in intellectual property made by Nintendo of America against Sony of America. Sony of America wished to avoid that suit, and opted to preclude the shaker feature.

Australia is only following suit because it doesn't know any better. Australian game releases have consistently been dictated by two main factors: PAL conversion and whether or not it is released in the USA. Nintendo has NOT lodged any applications for patents or trademarks with respect to the "Rumble Pak" in Australia. Therefore, the legal considerations in Australia are non-existent, as they only apply to America. The only logical explanation is that Sony of Australia is blindly following USA's footsteps because that has been the policy for as long as

video games have been in Australia.

It surprises me in no way that your magazine should diffuse such ridiculous propaganda as the shaker feature being "superfluous". You are merely acting as a yes-man because you are the PlayStation magazine that has an "official" mandate. You disgust me.

I am also aware that a few of the writers for your magazine contribute to "Hyper Magazine". If you truly believe the shaker feature to be superfluous for the Sony analogue pad, then I eagerly await your contradictory views on Nintendo's Rumble Pak.

I challenge you to say that the Nintendo Rumble Pak is superfluous when you review it. Prove me wrong and show me that video game journalism in Australia is not some joke of an advertising billboard.

- Without bias,

K Cheung

Okay, let's get this straight. Sony dropped the shaking feature of the analog pad in all versions outside of Japan. According to Sony, this was because the consumer response to it in Japan was not great. It has nothing to do with Nintendo's patent application for its Rumble Pak, besides which, the Sony pad is significantly different in design and operation from the Rumble Pak. Sony estimates that the shaking feature would add up to 20% on the retail price, and this would reduce the number of people who could afford it. In addition, of the games which will support the analog pad in the future, not all will incorporate the shaking feature.

As for our assertion that the shaking feature is "superfluous", we are prepared to stand by this until we see evidence otherwise. The only games so far which use the shaking feature in an intelligent manner (other than just shaking whenever you hit an 'out of bounds' area) have been Bushido Blade (due out here next year) and Tobal 2 (which won't be released outside of Japan at all).

And finally, as for what Hyper magazine thinks of the Nintendo Rumble Pak, well, that's up to the guys at Hyper and we have nothing to do with it.

BEST GAME EVER MADE?

I think that Crash Bandicoot is one of the best games on the PlayStation ever made. I can't wait for Crash 2. I think Tomb Raider is too. Is there going to be a Tomb Raider 2? Your magazine rules. And I think you should put Cool Borders on your CD.

Bye for now

- From Technodude

It is nice to hear from someone who appreciates our old friend Crash. You will be pleased to know that Crash 2 is well under way and

should be out before Christmas. Likewise with Tomb Raider 2.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HEAR?

Why do game developers actually think that people like Techno "music"? I put music in inverted commas as I believe it is not music. Nobody that I know likes it, how about Metallica for a Soundtrack? Now THAT would rock.

**- Dane Jago
Cyberspace**

Game developers love techno music because it's easy to write (the bad stuff is, anyway) and the sound chip in the PlayStation (and other consoles, for that matter) can easily create the appropriate noises. Furthermore, techno music is "hip with the kids" at the moment. Music that originates from acoustic sources only sounds right when it's played directly off CD, but depending on how the programmers tell the PlayStation to load the game, this is not always possible (many games load further parts of the stage or whatever from the CD while you're playing the last one).

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE EIGHT TUBES UNDER THE HOOD!

I have just recently purchased my PlayStation (yeah, at last I got one!). I had no idea on what games or bits and pieces to buy so I went to my local newsagent and came away with your magazine. Talk about impressive with all the reviews on the latest games and accessories on the market, your mag gets a big thumbs up.

Just one thing, after hiring and trying Porsche Challenge and Need for Speed 1&2, I was left feeling a little disappointed. Don't get me wrong, I did enjoy them, but they just had something missing. I know what it is, I couldn't really relate to the cars because they are all exotics and God only knows when the last time I saw a Lambo or such screaming around. So my solution is to talk someone out there into converting a PC game called Touring Car Champions for the PlayStation. Just imagine screaming around Bathurst chasing the likes of Seton, Brock and Johnson at home on the PlayStation! Or maybe someone could come up with a full V8 Shell Australian Touring Car Series, or even the Super bikes.

P.S. Your exotics may be alright to fantasize about, but give us and the world a taste of real Aussie V8 muscle and sound, PLEASE SOMEONE.

- William Greig

Sorry William, disappointment time. There are currently no plans to bring a V8 touring car game to the PlayStation. The PC game you mentioned is, to quote the editor

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Feedback
Playstation Magazine
78 Renwick St,
Redfern,
NSW 2016

E-mail:
playstation@next.com.au

and the distributor didn't even send us a copy because they were scared we'd give it 5 out of 100. In fact we would probably have given it 1 out of 100." Say no more.

However, there is a top secret driving game coming out next year from Sony which they don't think we know about. Heh heh heh... we've seen it (well, ten seconds of video footage of it, at least) and we can tell you now that IT WILL BLOW YOU AWAY. But we can't say anything else. Yet.

SNOTTY-NOSED ANKLE BITERS

I've been itching to write to your magazine ever since the 1st issue came out. I'll cut to the chase and won't bore you with my high appraisal of this wonderful publication. Here are a few questions I have been wanting to ask for a while now:

1. Why was Formula 1 given a 10? Now in comparison to Wipeout 2097, written by the same mob mind you, is seen as a better game in my view, strangely enough that I like simulations better than arcade racers. And both games had the same tallies in the Graphics and Sound department. Please elaborate on this mystery.

2. I hear rumours that Resident Evil 2 will be heavily censored by our strict government laws, more so that its previous successor. Will this result in an extended release date? Doesn't our government know that the largest percentage of users are 18-25 year olds, not snotty-nosed ankle biters.

3. Being one of the rare few to own a steering wheel, light gun and link cable with another friend, could you tell me what games, old and new, which are worthy of such enjoyment enhancing peripherals?

4. Why aren't programmers using the second memory card slot to save our games onto. I mean it just sits there and most of my games only use the one slot. I have to swap games saves each time I play the dang thing. What is their reason for their laziness?

Oh well, that's all I have time for. Hope to find some answers in your next issue, that's if you print my e-mail, of course.

- Mark Johnson

1. "Why was F1 given a 10?" Perhaps "Why wasn't Wipeout 2097 given a 10?" is a better question. We felt that F1 has a far wider appeal, as it can be enjoyed by anyone with so much as a passing interest in motor sport, whereas Wipeout 2097 is the sort of game you either love or hate. For the record, we love Wipeout 2097!

2. All rumours of censorship are just rumours at this stage. Until the final version is submitted to the OFLC, nobody can say what will or won't be taken out. And no, our government doesn't have a clue.

3. Steering Wheel: Any of the better driving games (especially F1). Light Gun: Die Hard Trilogy, Area 51, um, err... there's not much else. Link cable: Destruction Derby (platinum 'cause it's cheap), Wipeout 2097, Final Doom, Armoured Core, and probably a few others that I can't quite recall at the moment.

4. Some do, but what pisses us off the most is when a game only lets you save to three positions, even though they only take up three out of the fifteen blocks on the memory card. Grrrr!

THE X FILE

Here's a couple of questions for ya.

1. Now that PSX mag is bi-monthly will I have to update my subscription after my fourth issue, (August) or after the year?

2. What does the 'X' in PSX stand for?

3. How do you choose the winners for comps?

Thanks for your time and I hope you can answer my questions.

I will read thy mag for ever and ever!

- James Williamson

1. Once the you've got the number of issues that you signed up for it's time to re-subscribe. There are special offers for re-subscribers and Rachel, our lovely subscriptions manager, will send you a letter when your subscription is nearly up.

2. Anything you want it to!

3. We pull them out of a very big box.

\$#!\$!

First of all, I just want to say that just because of the letter which said you should cut out swearing, doesn't mean you should. I mean, sure, don't feel like you have to make your mag like the sequel to Pulp Fiction, but don't be afraid to swear. Swear words are nothing to be afraid of, and I'm sure that everyone out there swears; readers, don't be afraid of words. Anyway, I just want to let you know that you are doing a good job. I liked Justin Putland's ideas, however, and I think that readers are far more likely to tell you what they like through a survey, rather than just those that write in. "Re-examination" would also be a good idea, just to see if you still play F1. And don't be afraid to give tens. Wipeout 2097 deserved one, in my opinion (but hey, this isn't my mag). Please have a release date section, I want to know the exact date to go to the shop and pick up a game, or at least a close approximation.

Now for some questions:

1. Would it be possible to have just a

rolling video of your fave and/or best games, even as PC movie files, just so we could see what they are like? Could that be done?

2. I missed issue one. What did Resident Evil & Crash get (just curious, I promise I'll buy it eventually)

3. Do the French, with Secam (as in Jap=NTSC and Australia = PAL) get their games before PAL countries?

4. In the PSX manual (yes, someone actually read it) it says to change games, just press "open" mid game, and put in your other game, and press reset. But in game manuals (yes, I read them, too) it says that you should never open the cover while the power is on. Which is right? I rang Sony and they didn't know.

5. I'm sure that many PSXers have and/or use the 'Net. Why not list good PSX websites in your mag.

6. What does the X stand for in PSX? (Please don't say eXtreme! I hate the word)

Thanks, just please consider my opinion and ideas

- Yoshi
Darwin, NT

Occasionally some of our reviewers may use language that's a little too coarse for some sensitive readers, and for that we apologise. The rest of our readers are free to speak their filthy little minds, but we'll censor anything we consider too 'fruity'.

1. No, no it couldn't. What about readers who don't have a PC, eh? We'll be sticking with our PlayStation compatible demo CD, thank you very much.

2. We gave Crash a 9, for which we received some flack from the more cynical readers out there. We haven't yet reviewed Resident Evil because it came out long before this mag existed, but Resident Evil: Directors Cut should be reviewed in our next issue.

3. The French get PAL games.

4. Both are right, but to cover themselves the publishers recommend the safest method. Taking a CD out

while it's still spinning won't do your PlayStation any favours.

5. Web using PlayStation owners probably have their own favourite sites, but here's a few of our favourites. Tell 'em we sent you!

• This one has lots of interesting links:

www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Vista/1289/

• This one has lots of cool

Japanese stuff:

www.aiai.com/freddy/animepsx/

• And, of course, the official Sony page: www.playstation.com

6. We aren't entirely sure, but we also hate that word!



Dragon Ball Z by Adam of Liverpool, NSW.



IF EVERYONE JUMPED OFF A CLIFF...

Congratulations on your fine mag. I would just like to say a bit about that guy in issue 4. The bad guy, he is the biggest ass wipe I've ever heard. If he reckons that the mag is so bad, why did he buy it in the first place? Or did he steal it? He was also a showoff. He had to brag that he had a Nintendo 64, a PlayStation and a Saturn. La de da de da!!!

Now, onto my questions:

1. When Tekken 3 comes out, could you do what Hyper did with Tekken 2 and have a type of review on all the characters with their story of entering the competition and who their enemy is?

2. Could you get some more information on Crash Bandicoot 2?

3. I got Ridge Racer a little while back, and I have gotten really far, I would like to know if you get something special if you get all 11 gold trophies.

I am just going to say a few words before I go. I rented Porsche Challenge and I really don't think it is that good. The steering is all funny, and it is pretty dumb. They should make more games like Rage/Ridge Racer, and I don't think that Tobal No.1 is that good either. The Tekken Series is better. I think I have talked enough now.

- Adam

1. Copy Hyper? No way!

2. When we were at E3 we spoke to Jason Rubin, the main artist/programmer/designer/co-boss of Naughty Dog, the company responsible for Crash Bandicoot. Apart from being the coolest person we met at the massive trade show, he was incredibly dedicated and enthusiastic when it came to talking about Crash 2. We should have a feature on the making of the game in our next issue, so stay tuned.

3. There's secret cars and you get to race the track backwards or in mirror mode, but that's about it.

SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM

Hey guys, thanks for a great magazine! I'm a long time PSX owner and I've been waiting ages for a decent Australian mag, well done. Couldn't possibly get a few more playable demos?

Anyway, I'm writing to you to hopefully provide some info for other readers, this is probably nothing new to you but I'll write it anyway. About six months ago, my PSX started stalling during the Tekken FMVs, and in-game BGMs wouldn't play continuously. My machine would also hang between bouts and I would have

to reset - or wait up to fifteen-twenty minutes until the laser found what it was looking for. Not being real keen to have to fix it, I did some checking around. The problem, as to the best of my knowledge is thus: sometimes in earlier model PSXs (mine was a SCPH 1002 I think) the laser can sometimes come out of alignment in its housing. This just happens sometimes, it isn't necessarily because you dropped it or whatever, though that won't help! There are several solutions 1. you can adjust the alignment screws yourself, this isn't hard, but if you screw it up you're in deep shit! (well...) 2. you can take it to Sony as you recommend in PlayStation #4 or 3. you can, as I did, take your machine back to where you bought it, and if you bought it at Target too, they'll give you your money back, well, a coupon, and you can get a new PSX and change. I got \$400 back and bought a new one for \$300! Good shit! Anyway hope that helps someone, and please print this, coz I know how hard it is for people with this problem to get info!

Well, many thanks for a filth mag!

- Koensayr
Brisbane

PS the black CD is to physically hide the empty blocks, which are left for anti-copy purposes! Maybe...

PPS No prize for the month's most informative letter? Howzabout a subscription?

PPPS Geez, you get some wankers writing in!

Interesting, perhaps this information will be of use to some readers. Just be sure you take note of the bit in this letter which says "If you screw it up you're in deep shit!"

JACK-ASS CHANCE

Hey, congratulations on the great mag. I'm really annoyed, every time I've bought this mag the f#*king newsagent hasn't had a demo CD to go with it. I was reading the offal Pom mag and it SUCKS - the worst \$13.95 I've ever spent, it was full of games that won't be in Australia for about a year. But yours is full of stuff I can relate to. Thanks for the hints for Porsche Challenge that were in issue #4, they were really helpful. Just a few questions:

1. I've been looking everywhere for a copy of Monster Trucks and I can't find it anywhere. Is it that it is not out yet, and if it isn't when is it due out and will it be 2 player?

2. The only games I have are driving games as well as Cool Boarders (it kicks ass) and I want to get a fighting game, what do you recommend?

3. Some guy in issue #4 said he put a PC game in his PlayStation and it worked, was he bullshitting?

And now some comments. I think you should divide your reviews into sections i.e. fighting, driving, that way

you could turn to the section you want and you don't have to flick through the whole mag. Also, I think you should have a few more prizes to give away in the comps cause I don't enter them cause I know I've got jack-ass chance of winning. Thanks for printing this and thanks for your help.

- your pal Nick

I suggest you either try a new newsagent or, better yet, subscribe!

1. It's been put on hold.

2. Soul Blade is the current biggie, though you'd be well advised to check out the Platinum re-release of Tekken.

3. I don't know what he was on!

Of course you don't have a chance of winning if you don't enter!

SHORT AND SWEET

Hi everyone. I will make this short and sweet. Great job on the magazine, I love the way you set everything out, I mean that it's not just that "cut and paste" sort of stuff. I have two questions.

1. Is Sony ever going to bring out the game of The Simpsons's.

2. When is Crash Bandicoot 2 going to hit the stores?

- Yours faithfully, James

1. Fox Interactive is the company that will be bringing out a Simpson's game - if there ever is one for the PlayStation. Although there's been no announcement so far, we're sure there'll be on eventually.

2. December.

WHERE'S MY BOXSTER?

First of all, I would like to congratulate you and the other staff on a great magazine. Now for my question, which I'm hoping either you or one of your staff can answer. On page 72 of your Issue 3 magazine this year, it says that the player has access to the Test Driver's Boxster when you finish the game and that you can even tweak it if the player finishes the game on 'medium' or 'evil' difficulty levels. Whenever I finish the game on the 'medium' difficulty level, the following message appears: "Prototype is now ready" Is this referring to the Test Driver's Boxster? What I want to know is, how can I access it? After seeing the credits I expected another car, but sadly there wasn't one. I think this Test Driver's Boxster is crucial if I'm to have any chance of finishing the game on 'evil'.

My second question concerns Tekken 2. Are there any more secret characters? I already have 21 characters including Alex. Also are there any cheats in Tekken 2, in particular, with Lei? I would greatly appreciate your help. Keep up the good work.

- Kindest regards, Brad

Hmm, curious... We had a similar experience when we

played it and we're at a loss to explain why. We are making inquiries, but in the meantime we recommend Nikita's Boxster - we had no trouble finishing the game in 'evil' mode with this car.

As for Tekken 2, there is a total of 20 main characters, plus Kazuya Mishima the boss, then Devil and Angel, and finally the extra weirdo characters Roger the 'roo and Alex the dino, making for a total of 25 all up.

KEEP THAT HAND WARM

Dear PlayStation I would like to thank you for showing the other so-called Mags how it's done, that Australia has got an original and informative mag. I was having trouble deciding between the PlayStation and the Nintendo 64 but your articles and reviews convinced me to buy the PlayStation.

Now regarding the letter from the Bad Guy (I am shaking in my boots, NOT), if he got his head out of the rhino's arse and stopped pulling his banjo, the games manufacturers' might listen to his suggestions. What kind of a Snapper-head buys a game without reading the reviews (FIFA 97)? And last but not least, who gives a shit how many game consoles you have, I still wouldn't piss in your ear if your small brain was on fire. So keep that hand warm and leave questions that are constructive to others. Bye all, and keep the game reviews coming (ha ha ha).

- Peter K

QUALITY MAGS

I'd like to say how disappointed I am in you guys for bothering to publish this idiot's letter. Why bother? If you are that starved for letters make something up... please?

I must congratulate the child for blessing us by taking his hands out of his pants long enough for him to send you the letter. If he can afford a PSX, a Saturn and a N64 then he obviously can also afford to buy every game available and try them out for himself and not bother wasting money on Aust.



HYPER»

*Hyper is Australia's only all-
formats video games magazine,
giving the best coverage of the
best games for each system.*

This month's Hyper features:

Oddworld - Abe's Oddysee.

Quake 2 preview

Moto Racer

NBA Hang Time

and much more...

Out Now



PlayStation and Hyper, both which I think are quality mags.

One thing I would like to see in your magazine is an alternative view as in a sub-review like some other mags (not mentioning the rivals) do because people like different things and one person's opinion may be the opposite of another. That way you get to find a reviewer whose tastes are similar to yours. You can then follow their choices for a decent game.

Thanks to the publishers for going bi-monthly... it makes the wait a little less tedious.

- Peter

Featuring alternate opinions in reviews is a great idea and is something I wish I could do on a regular basis. Generally, though, most of our reviewers concur on each other's appraisals of games, but if some of us think a game's great and the rest of us hate it then we'll make mention of it in the review.

WHAT GIVES?

The Big W ad in your last issue had a \$5.00 off coupon which expired at the end of June, but the magazine didn't come out until the beginning of July, what gives?

- Trigger (and heaps of other readers)

Well, I guess someone made a mistake when writing that advertisement. Nothing to do with us, though. Honest.

STRICTLY UNDERGROUND

Do you know anything about an interactive CD by Sony America called

Underground? When can we get it? If not, why not?

- Someone Darwin

It's a demo CD (two, actually) that is sent out to members of Sony's Underground club. As well as playable demos of new games, it features previews, behind the scenes features, cheats that can be downloaded to your memory card, music videos and heaps of other cool stuff. Unfortunately it is only available to subscribers in America (the discs are NTSC and won't work on Aussie PlayStations), but we are pushing Sony to make similar things available for our demo disc.

MUMMY, WHAT'S A SHLONGER?

Let me state from the outset that I thought your review of Micro Machines V3 was fair and equitable. I have just purchased a copy and found it loaded with the same excellent gameplay I used to enjoy on other consoles. But this aside, why, oh why do game developers insist on including mindless fill-ins that detract from the speed of the game? I refer, of course, to the idiotic little comments from the characters in the game. Is it loading something while Jade tells me that "it's time now..." or did Codemasters think that I might enjoy sitting around with my shlonger in my hands listening to this mindless crap?

- Lewis Mitchell

You have touched upon a subject that irritates us no end! We hate useless screens, we hate them very much!



This beautiful pencil of Yoshimitsu was drawn by Keith Sneddon of Edgeworth, NSW.



Rayman knows what magazine to read! From Jimmy Asher of Yeppoon, Qld.

STOP THE DECLINE IN STANDARDS

Just a note to say how disappointed I was to find spelling mistakes in your otherwise excellent magazine. It is obviously a very professional magazine, and one of which you should be justifiably proud, hence my disappointment.

p.38: "adventure game staring a young female..."

p.97: "your stuck for something..." Should be you're, short for you are.

And most blatant of all, considering it is a full page ad., p.13: "Try not to blow up the world while your saving it" Same again.

My three sons tell me that I'm old and that spelling isn't important anymore - maybe they're spending too much time in front of the screen. Please stop the decline in standards, because I still care.

- Lynne Holland

Although we can claim innocence on the count of the full page ad., the editor must take full responsibility for any other spelling mistakes which end up in the magazine once it's printed. We will strive to keep the standard higher in the future, not only for ourselves, but also as an example to readers who send in letters full of obscene spelling and grammatical errors. Thankyou for caring, it's good to

know that someone does!

JUST OUT OF CURIOSITY

You could say I'm your biggest fan because I have every issue of your mag and I have entered every comp (but I have not won yet). Now let's get down to business. Now just out of curiosity, will there be any more sequels to Dark Forces and Rebel Assault? Will there be another football game besides Jonah Lomu? Will there be another part to Jet Rider? Is V-Rally the best car game yet? Will there be a Destruction Derby 3? And finally, will there be a Crash Bandicoot 3?

Thanks for reading it and I would appreciate if you would answer my questions.

- P.D.P.

Okay, down to business. The next Star Wars game for the PlayStation will be Teras Kasi, the 3D fighting game. No news yet if DF2 a.k.a. Jedi Knight will be converted from PC. The only other football games at the moment are all soccer or gridiron. I saw Jet Moto (Rider) 2 at E3, so it will probably come out here sooner or later. Yes, V-Rally is the best car game currently available (even without the analog pad). No news on DD3, though it's unlikely. Crash Bandicoot 3?! Crash 2's not even out yet!

PC PowerPlay

For those that want to really know gaming.

PC PowerPlay is the magazine especially for all you PC gamers out there.

You've spent the last 3 hours conquering territories in Age Of Empires, or spent all of Saturday putting Star Trek protocol to practice in the wonderful Star Trek Academy.

Perhaps you really put human endurance to the test and spent a whopping 6 hours beta testing Ultima Online.

All those hours spent playing the latest and greatest games means it's hard to keep up with what's going on in this fast paced industry. So we do all the fiddly bits for you.

The computer is a wonderful thing, but it's only the medium through which you can hook up to the best that gaming has to offer. We sacrifice hours of gaming to bring you the real issues that mean something to you - the latest news and reviews so you know what you need to get straight into the fray. In the October issue we look at the next generation of Intel chips, take a sneak peak at Win 98 and look at DOS and ask the eternal question - "Is DOS dead?". We've also got a profile on Beam Software, explore software piracy, and launch the prestigious PC PowerPlay Game Of The Year awards. All this plus the latest in which games to look out for, which to buy, and which to avoid.



ON SALE SEPTEMBER 24

STUCK IN A GAME?

Having trouble getting through a game? Are you lost searching for the magic cucumber which opens up the next level? Or perhaps you have an excess of tips which you'd like to share with other readers? Miss Nurse has the tips at her finger tips. Write to: **HELPSTATION** PlayStation Magazine 78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016

SYNDICATE WARS

Having trouble executing unwanted citizens? Do your agents refuse to obey your orders? Do they keep lying down and dying on the job? Eurocorp motivational officer, Steve Polak, steps in to help sort out your sorry state of affairs.

Getting a bank loan

First up finances, which are mighty useful in paying for agent upgrades. After you have completed a mission, and are in reasonable shape (no agent losses), wander about until you find a bank (these have bigger doors - three wide - when compared to most other structures). Nuke the place and once you have fought off the local boys in blue, pick up the briefcases scattered about the place. Moola! Oh, and if you feel like it, you could be pre-emptive in your approach and blow up the Police Station first to avoid trouble later, but this is a risky operation.

Weapons

The LR rifle is easily the most useful weapon in the game. It may not have as rapid a rate of fire, or as heavy a punch as other weapons, but it does have extreme range, and shooting at a foe when he can't reply is always a nice thing. Try alternating between mini-guns and LR rifles (once they have charged up another shot). Or you can try to hit and run, but I always find that I get drawn into combat once the first volley of LR has been fired.

It is even worth using an LR rifle when you haven't completely researched one yet (even though this means your energy might be drained). Just equip one agent with it (or perhaps two if you are feeling adventurous), and hope you are lucky. However, you should make sure that your research facility is pumped up to finish the LR as soon as possible. Put it at the top of your list, and you won't regret it.

Also, I find that the withering fire of the mini-guns is at times more effective than the lasers (even though this isn't supposed to be the case). So experiment, as mini-guns can be lethal against smaller numbers of easily shreddable enemy agents.

Another point which may sound obvious, is to make sure that you give all of your agents medpacks, as they are invaluable. Pumping your agents up into the red can also be a good idea, as long as they aren't seriously wounded, as this inhibits their healing rate.

Your agents are far more effective mini-gunners when you control them manually, so always pick the agent you think is in the most strategically important position and blaze away like Rambo's long lost illegitimate brother.

Defence

Try using civilians (influenced by the persuadatron) as human shield accompaniments to your army, as they can absorb a fair amount of damage that might otherwise hit you, and it might just help you get through a particularly tough encounter. Ethical stuff, eh?

Damage Control - Handling APCs

APCs are sometimes really stupid, and they are a classic example of a target deserving of your LR rifle attention, as you can sometimes nail them without even taking any incoming fire yourself. Learn to duck under a building when an APC has targeted one of your agents, but only duck with the threatened agent. Try and get the others to circle around behind the APC so you can mini-gun it into oblivion.

Have fun, and enjoy the pyrotechnics!

SUIKODEN

Power of the Elements

If five of your venturing characters are equipped with the five magical stones - Fire, Water, Wind, Earth, and Lightning - you will be able to combine magical spells to inflict devastating damages on the enemy. The characters' magic levels must be at least three to four, and the resulting damage you can inflict will be upwards of 2000 hp.

Guardian Characters

Various characters in the game have a special relationship or bonding with another character. When one is close to dying, the other will guard that character and take the hit. For this to happen, you must have both characters in your venturing party. If you can work out who looks after who, you may well save yourself some heartbreak later.



Novelty Items

These items are novelty & extra items. You will find tons of these items throughout your journeys. But

before they can be sold/used, they must first be identified. When you first obtain one of these novelty items, they will have a "?"



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GAMES ONLINE

HELP STATION

mark. Take it to a nearby inspection shop (store with the magnifying glass sign). After identifying the item, you can sell it or you can keep it and place it in your castle bath. Some novelty items are worth a lot more than others. Items worth vary from 100 gps to 100,000 gps.

Miscellaneous Items

Throughout your journeys, you will find various items which have no apparent use. You don't need them to finish the game, but if you give them to the right character you'll find each item's true purpose. Paint Cells are needed by one of the artistic members of your party to paint you and the rest of the main characters. Books will often contain information on the kingdom and its history. Some are totally useless, though. One member of your party will keep them in your castle's library for you. Window Cells allow you to change the colours & styles of the text window. Music Cells will allow you to change the sound effects of the game.

NEED FOR SPEED 2

Nine camera angles

At the main menu, select Race. Hold all four shoulder buttons and all four action buttons until the race begins. You now have nine camera views instead of the basic four.

Passwords

LILZIP - Bonus car: Ford Indigo
SHOTME - Bonus track: Monolithic Studios
POWRUP - Pioneer engines; faster acceleration for all cars (lasts for one race)



More secret cars

Enter the desired car's password. Return to the main menu and select Race. It doesn't matter what normal car you have already selected. If you want to use a secret car password in two-player mode, simply replace the ME at the end of each password with U for the second player.

ARMYME - Army truck
BEETME - Car with sunroof
BMRME - BMW
BNZME - Mercedes-Benz
BUGME - Volkswagen bug
BUSME - Yellow school bus
CITME - Citroen 2CV
JEPME - Comanche pick-up truck
LCME - Land cruiser
LIMOME - White limousine
MAZME - Mazda MX5
QUATME - Audi Quattro
SEMIME - Semi truck cab
SNOWME - Same as ARMYME, different trailer
TRAMME - Monolithic Studios tram
VANME - Combi minivan
VOVME - Volvo station wagon with sunroof
YJME - Jeep Wrangler
CRATME - Brown wooden crate
LOGME - Long wooden log from Pacific Spirit
OUTHOUSE - Small brown outhouse from North Country
STDAME - Souvenir stand from Mediterraneo (green)
STDBME - Souvenir stand from Mediterraneo (blue)
STDCME - Souvenir stand from Mediterraneo (red)
TREXME - T-Rex from Monolithic Studios
WAGOME - Old covered wagon from Monolithic Studios

RALLY CROSS

These codes are entered at the high score name or the new season name. You don't have to play a season to enter the code, once it's been put in, quit out to the main menu and then play whatever mode you wish. Here are the cheat passwords. Entering one of these is equivalent to finishing one of the seasons, enabling access to the new cars and track variations.

VET ME: Takes you to veteran season
IM A PRO: Takes you to pro season
WEEOO: As if you'd won the normal, head-on, and mixed pro seasons
Assorted codes:
BANZI: Improves acceleration
STONE: Gives the cars much more weight and actually makes the game



more enjoyable.

FEATHER: light cars
FLOAT: low-gravity
SPINNER: Lowers tyre friction
Silly codes:
FAT TIRES
NO WHEELS
WHEELS

TOSHINDEN 3

Random Character Select

At the player select screen, simply press and hold L1 + L2 + R2 + R1 and your fighter will be chosen for you. Why does a code like this exist? Am I asking a stupid question, or are kids these days so lazy they can't even be bothered to make up their own minds?!

BLOOD OMEN: LEGACY OF KAIN

Enter the following codes on the title screen or when the game is paused.

Blood Code

To give Kain more blood, press Up, Right, Square, O, Up, Down, Right, Left.

Magic Code

Gives Kain more magic energy. Enter Right, Right, Square, O, Up, Down, Right, Left.

Cinematic Code

Access all FMVs in the Dark Diary. Enter Left, Right, Square, O, Up, Down, Right, Left.

CRUSADER: NO REMORSE

All Items and Weapons

At the Password Screen, enter in LOSR. A message will say that the password is invalid, ignore it. Start the game and press CIRCLE + R1 to restore weapons and items at anytime during the game. Refill Health and Energy: At the Password Screen, enter LOSR. A message will say that the password is invalid, ignore it. Start the game and press SQUARE + R1 to refill your health and energy at anytime.

Level Codes

Level 2: FWQP
Level 3: PLRQ
Level 4: SZNF
Level 5: TD5S
Level 6: J1BT
Level 7: K2CV
Level 8: N3DW
Level 9: M4FX
Level 10: X5GZ
Level 11: C6HO
Level 12: D7J1
Level 13: F8K2
Level 14: FGL3
Level 15: JFM4

HARDCORE 4X4

Enter these names at the Time Trial Edit Names point.
Mainline: This gives you all the levels of difficulty such as pro and extreme.
Dutchman: This allows you to play asteroids when you go to the Credits under Option.
Rainfrog: Yes, it rains frogs.

KING OF FIGHTERS '95

Play a team match with three of the same character: At the Game Select Screen choose Team Play. Pick Team Edit at the at the next screen. At the Fighter Select Screen, press and hold START and press DOWN + TRIANGLE, LEFT + X, RIGHT + SQUARE, and lastly press UP + CIRCLE. You should hear a sound if you've entered it correctly. You will now be able to pick the same player up to three times in team play. This works in both in two and one player mode. Play As The Bosses: At the character select screen, hold the START button and press UP+O, Right+Square, Left+X, Down+Triangle.



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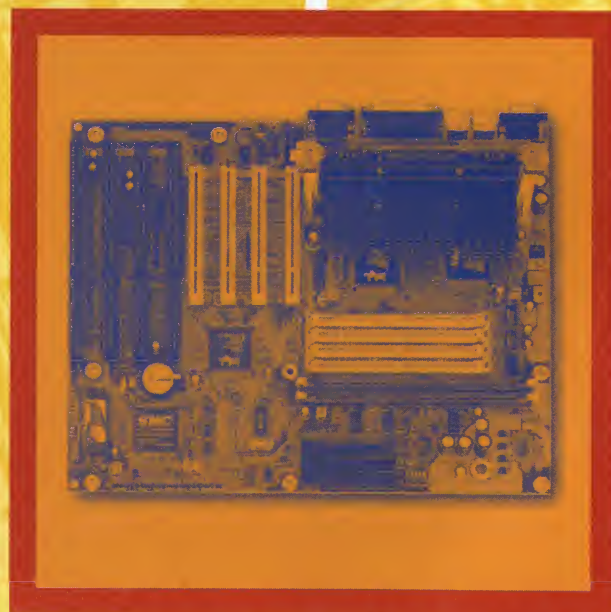
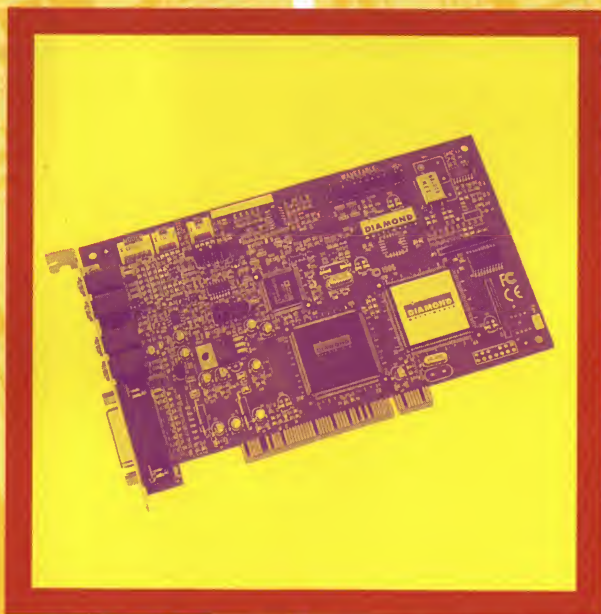
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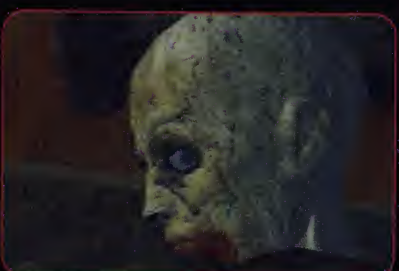
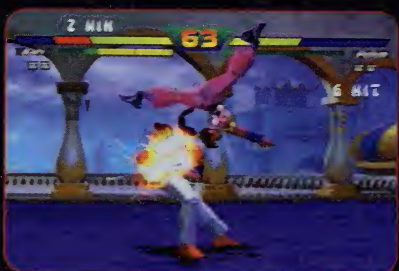
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Next Issue

THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

ISSUE #6, NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1997

Entrees

Gex: Enter the Gecko - Sun dried lizard, served in a 3D landscape

Agent Armstrong - Food for hungry secret service agents

Croc - Lightly braised lizard, presented on platforms

Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha: Bruised and battered

Colony Wars - Bring your own colostomy bag



Main Course

Crash Bandicoot 2 - Served on a spit with an apple in his mouth

Time Crisis - Our diners are encouraged to kill their own main course!

The Lost World - Sauteed saurian in a juice of foolish humans

Tomb Raider 2 - Femme Fatal served cool as ice

Ace Combat 2 - Not your usual airline food

G-Police - High-tech take-out



Dessert

Final Fantasy VII - Delicious graphics, served on three black platters

After's

Lots of tasty new games

And all the cool stuff you need to know about!



Heart Racing Action



- Official cars from 1997 WRC season
- Beta testing by Ari Vatanen (WRC Champion)
- Multi-player mode
- Varied weather and terrain driving conditions
- Real time 3D imaging and Dolby Surround Sound

V-RALLY

97 CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION



The next generation of game for the PlayStation

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